



ACOSS Five Year Impact Strategy 2023-2028

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Foreword

A fair economy, an end to poverty, an inclusive community and a liveable climate: in 2026 ACOSS will mark 70 years of working towards this future with our members, partners and the community.

Our new Five-Year Impact Strategy 2023-2028 builds on the success of our previous strategic plan, which guided our activities from 2019 to 2022. Achievements over this period include the establishment of a world-class poverty and inequality research partnership with UNSW and the introduction of our new community engagement model, which puts people affected by poverty at the centre of policy development. We also contributed to important policy outcomes, including the abolishment of Robodebt and mandatory cashless debit, the first real increase in unemployment payments in more than 20 years, and the delivery of COVID-19 stimulus to support the community sector.

Over the next five years, we will strengthen the way ACOSS works in order to achieve greater impact. We will bring people together—especially people on low incomes, our members, academia, philanthropists and partners—to work towards a future where everyone has an adequate income, secure housing, decent paid work, affordable clean energy and access to the services they need, funded through a fair tax system. We will continue to advocate for self-determination for Australia’s first peoples. We will stand up for human rights.

Our strategic goals, to put people directly affected by inequality at the heart of policy decisions and halve poverty and reduce inequality by 2030, will inform all our activities.

Through our six Impact Priorities, we will seek resourcing and work do all we can to ensure that:

- people affected by poverty or disadvantage are directly involved in key decision making
- incomes are adequate
- everyone has access to affordable, secure housing
- people disadvantaged in the job market are supported into solid employment
- community services are people-centred and reduce disadvantage and harm
- actions to support the energy transition and reduce carbon emissions improve living standards for people on low incomes
- a fairer tax system is developed to pay for community support and services into the future.

Ensuring the wellbeing of our team is key to achieving our goals, as is our success in securing sustainable resourcing, our embrace of technology, and our commitment to measuring our impact.

Join us as we strive for a sustainable poverty-free future, in which all people are treated with dignity and respect.

Cassandra Goldie & Hang Vo

Who We Are

- We are a **national advocate** supporting people affected by poverty, disadvantage and inequality and **the peak council** for community services nationally.
- We work at the **national** level, to influence changes to Federal policies and laws.
- We are **dynamic, determined** and **strategic**.
- We are **uncompromising** in our commitment to human rights and equity and to calling out human rights violations.
- We work to find **common ground** across difference.
- We are **non-partisan**.

Our Vision

Our vision is for:

- An Australia that is **free of poverty** in all its forms.
- Economies that are **fair, sustainable and resilient**.
- Communities that are **just, peaceful and inclusive**.

Our Values

- We believe that **no one should live in poverty** and that all people should be treated with **dignity and respect**.
- We are committed to the full realisation of **human rights**.
- We value **equity and diversity and work inclusively**.
- We support **self-determination** for Australia's First Peoples.
- We want a **sustainable future** for all.

Our Strategic Goals

Our **two Strategic Goals** inform all that we do.

Strategic Goal One: People affected are at the centre of policy debate and decisions

People affected by poverty and disadvantage **are at the centre** of policy debate and decisions, including by ensuring that:

- **People** who access services participate in key **public processes** and are **partners** in **service design**, along with governments, communities and providers.
- The voices of **civil society** and **people experiencing poverty** and disadvantage are amplified in the public sphere.
- People on low incomes or facing other barriers to access are supported through the **transformation** of our economy and service systems.

Strategic Goal Two: Poverty is halved by 2030 and inequalities are reduced

ACOSS uses the **UN Sustainable Development Goals** to measure progress, in particular SDGs 1 and 10 to reduce poverty and inequality.

- SDG 1 **End Poverty** and SDG 10 **Reduce Inequality**, specifically.
- Reducing at least by half the proportion of people living in poverty (SDG 1)
- Progressively achieving and sustaining income growth of the 40 per cent of the population with the lowest incomes at a rate higher than the national average (SDG 1)
- Empower and promote social and political inclusion of all (SDG 10)
- Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protections policies, and progressively achieve greater equality (SDG 10).

We will hold ourselves to account on whether we are achieving these Strategic Goals by ensuring we measure our impact.

Our Five-Year Impact Priorities

To make progress on our Strategic Goals, we have identified the following Impacts as highest priority. Our Impact Priorities are the key policy and process changes needed to make progress for people and communities within the next five years.

If we deliver on our Impact Priorities, we will have changed our democratic culture, with people affected by poverty and disadvantage at the centre of debates and decision-making that affect them, with the right policies implemented to halve poverty and reduce inequalities.

Impact Priority 1: Participation and Agency

1. People directly affected by poverty or disadvantage participate in key decisions and policy reforms impacting them and the design and delivery of services designed to support them.

Under this Impact Priority, we will succeed if:

- 1.1 The community sector builds support for self-determination and justice for First Nations peoples including support for Voice, Treaty and Truth, enabling participation of First Nations peoples in decisions that directly affect the outcomes for their communities.
- 1.2 Key government processes, forums and advisory groups have greater representation and inclusion of people with a lived and living experience of low incomes.
- 1.3 The community sector enables greater participation by people directly affected in service design, delivery, research and evaluation.

Impact Priority 2: Income Support and Housing

2. Incomes are adequate and housing is more accessible, decent and affordable.

Under this Impact Priority, we will succeed if:

- 2.1 Income support payments including Allowances are substantially increased and accessible to meet basic needs.
- 2.2 A permanent independent social security expert advisory body exists to improve social security policy decision making.
- 2.3 Low-income housing supply is increased to address current and projected community need as is Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

Impact Priority 3: Employment

3. People disadvantaged in the labour market are supported to obtain secure, quality, paid work.

Under this Impact Priority, we will succeed if:

- 3.1 A full employment target and strategy is in place.
- 3.2 Fewer people are unemployed long-term.

3.3 Employment services are transformed to provide real help to people and reduce harm.

Impact Priority 4: Community Services

4. The funding and design of community services enables services to be people-centred and effective in reducing disadvantage and harm.

Under this Impact Priority, we will succeed if:

- 4.1 Community services receive adequate transparent funding and indexation to deliver services and influence systemic change.
- 4.2 Peak bodies and advocacy organisations are active and effective in influencing public policy and service design.
- 4.3 Local communities and leaders are empowered and resourced to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

Impact Priority 5: Climate and Energy

5. Action to reduce carbon emissions improves living standards for people experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

Under this Impact Priority, we will succeed if:

- 5.1 Low-income homes get access to energy efficiency and performance measures.
- 5.2 People on low incomes are front and centre in policy design for energy transition.
- 5.3 The Federal Government commits to fair and inclusive policies and stronger targets in their response to the climate crisis.
- 5.4 Government assistance to people and communities affected by disasters is substantially increased.

Impact Priority 6: Tax and Revenue

6. Tax system is fairer and generates sufficient revenue to support services, safety nets and economic development.

Under this Impact Priority, we will succeed if:

- 6.1 The Government develops a responsible plan to fairly secure the revenue needed to fund supports and services into the future from people and companies that have the capacity to pay.
- 6.2 The income tax base is strengthened by removing loopholes used to avoid and evade tax, and by reducing incentives for investment that is speculative, unproductive or environmentally harmful.
- 6.3 The tax treatment of superannuation is fairer, and the system contributes to the public revenue needed to fund services for an increasingly ageing population.
- 6.4 The tax treatment of housing is reformed to improve affordability and reduce the tax bias in favour of people who already hold substantial assets and against those excluded from secure housing.

Our Ways of Working

ACOSS have a clear Theory of Change and distinct ways of working to have maximum impact.

The breadth of the ways we work and our strategic, flexible approach is the unique capacity of ACOSS. We continuously assess the most effective ways we work to increase our impact, responding to change and new opportunities to have maximum impact. Our ways of working are not prescriptive, but rather we work in a dynamic and flexible way to achieve the best outcomes.

Wow 1: Enable and Amplify People and Communities Affected

We **enable** participation and **amplify** the voices and calls for agency of people directly affected by poverty and disadvantage. We engage, support and empower people to participate in public policy and processes, and to share their experiences and perspectives with the media, politicians and key influencers, leveraging ACOSS' political and media access and influence.

Wow 2: Develop Policy Ideas

We develop robust, evidence based social and economic **policy ideas**, drawing on the experience of people directly affected by poverty and disadvantage and the expertise of ACOSS members and academics and the best of global comparisons.

Wow 3: Conduct Strategic Research

We conduct or commission **research** to fill gaps in the evidence base for ACOSS and our members to use strategically to influence change in policies and systems that negatively impact people affected by poverty and disadvantage.

Wow 4: Advocate to Government and Parliament

We advocate for change and maintain strong and constructive relationships with **decision-makers** to facilitate access to the highest levels of power for people directly affected and the community sector.

Wow 5: Convene and Mobilise the ACOSS Membership

We convene and mobilise our members to support coordinated **community sector advocacy** for change in policies or systems that impact on those affected by poverty and disadvantage.

Wow 6: Activate Strategic Alliances

We develop and support **strategic and diverse alliances** that work together to advance shared purpose and impact priorities.

Wow 7: Leverage Media and Public Profile

We establish and maintain strong relationships with the **media** to influence public debate that builds community understanding and support for our impact priorities.

Wow 8: Undertake Campaigns and Community Mobilisation

We undertake **community mobilisation** activities, including support for public, digital and grass roots **campaigning**.

How We Measure Impact

We will track our success in achieving our Impact Priorities using our Impact Measurement Framework (IMF). Our IMF will gather and share the evidence to understand, evaluate and demonstrate our impact. The IMF will draw on both data and engagement, including with people and communities directly affected by poverty and disadvantage.

Our Enablers

To achieve our Impact Priorities, we are committed to building and maintaining a high-performing organisation by ensuring the following enablers are in place:

Inclusion, Equity and Diversity

- Improve our governance, organisational systems and processes to be more inclusive, with greater equity and diversity
- Accelerate inclusion and equity practices, leading to a more diverse workplace, with greater representation across the organisation
- Foster more inclusive participation through ACOSS' membership to deliver greater equity, diversity and representation that better reflects the community.

Sustainable Resources

- Secure necessary resources and funding, including by exploring new, untapped funding opportunities that align with our priorities
- Collaborate with our members and partners to leverage and share resources more effectively.

A Thriving Team

- Support the health and wellbeing of our staff by ensuring an inclusive, supportive and sustainable work environment
- Recognise and celebrate team successes and learn from our failures together.

Effective Governance and Operating Systems and Technology

- Improve operational systems and processes, including to ensure that our technological systems support more effective external engagement and operations.

Adaptive Planning and Impact Measurement

- Develop new planning, performance and impact measurement frameworks that support strategic focus while also enabling responsiveness to the dynamic policy environment.