

# FUND THE ACT'S COMMUNITY SECTOR

## A GENUINE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY SECTOR

Our community sector is critical to support people where and when they need it - providing a range of services to improve wellbeing, social, educational, justice, health and welfare outcomes so everyone can thrive in the ACT.

When we face hardship, they are the places we go to for help. They understand the experiences and needs of the most at risk people in our community and provide support to people in ways that are fundamentally different to our government services.

However, community organisations often have to jump through many administrative hurdles to get funding from the government and operate contract by contract. It's not sustainable.

In a housing crisis, a climate crisis and a cost of living crisis, we need to go further, faster to make this city a fairer place to live. The community sector is facing more demand on their services, without the proper resourcing from the government to help those most in need.

The ACT Greens will ensure the community sector is properly resourced and will treat them as equal partners to support people when and where they need it.

### THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Provide short-term financial support for community sector organisations while we determine longer term secure funding arrangements
- ▲ Provide funding in the event of climate emergencies or natural disasters
- ▲ Increase community sector funding with workload and population growth
- ▲ Ensure employee pay and conditions are comparable to similar work in the private sector and public service
- ▲ Invest further in the Sector Sustainability program
- ▲ Establish and implement a 10 year refurbishment strategy for ACT Government owned buildings leased to the community sector
- ▲ Establish the Office of the Coordinator General, Community Sector Partnerships

# IMMEDIATE SECTOR SUPPORT

The sector is unsustainably funded by the government. Many organisations need an immediate funding injection so they can provide the essential services many Canberrans need.

The bureaucratic processes and hurdles the community sector has to jump through for funding limits their ability to allocate resources on the frontline.

It is why we need a multi-stage approach. There are structural issues that need to be fixed, as well as a quick funding lifeline to keep these critical services operating and supporting the community.

Over recent years, some subsectors within the community sector have undergone commissioning processes which have resulted in longer-term ACT Government funding arrangements. But there are subsectors that are yet to go through that process, such as domestic, family and sexual violence, mental health, and justice.

For these organisations, many simply have their funding rolled over based on old contracts. This does not account for inflation, or employer obligations such as superannuation, staff training and support, and population growth.

There is a significant risk that some of our crucial community services will not be able to continue delivering services under their current contracts, before their subsector has had the opportunity to go through a commissioning process.

Our short term response will provide immediate financial relief to organisations that need it most, with a focus on domestic, family, intimate and sexual violence, mental health services and advocacy, disability services and advocacy, and justice and community safety.

## OUR SHORT TERM PLAN

Within the first 3 months of Government, the ACT Greens will undertake a review of all community sector organisations that are:

- Currently delivering crucial ACT Government funded services on old contracts;
- Belong to sub-sectors that have not undergone commissioning process in the last four years;
- Are at risk of reducing crucial service delivery due to existing ACT Government contracts not reflecting inflation or the actual costs of delivering services.

Based on the review, we will provide transitional financial support that - at minimum - will support services to continue at existing levels until the completion of the next applicable commissioning process.

We will also establish a rapid funding mechanism in the event of a climate emergency or natural disaster, declared by the ACT Government as a state of emergency. Climate emergencies have a significant impact in the moment and during recovery. The community sector in many cases delivers the tangible support, on the ground, that people need.

## INVESTMENT:

- \$300,000 for the transitional review for organisations awaiting a commissioning for outcomes process
- \$20m for transitional funding top-ups

# A MORE SUSTAINABLE SECTOR

The community sector's success is a testament to their deep relationships with the people they support, willingness to pilot innovative solutions to long-standing problems, collaborative approach, and holistic view of a person's support needs.

The sector has been loud and clear: the ACT Government must do more to ensure sustainable funding models exist to help the sector thrive and support people when and where they need it.

The Sector Sustainability Program was initiated in response to ACTCOSS' report Counting the Costs: Sustainable funding for the ACT community sector, which was published in 2021.

A sustainable and enduring community sector reduces pressure and service demand on expensive, intensive crisis services such as institutionalisation in hospitals, the justice system and child protection system.

There are over 100 organisations forming Canberra's community sector and each bring a unique set of skills and expertise to many challenging

experiences. That's why there is no 'one size fits all' approach and we need a holistic approach to uplift the sector to better support the ACT.

## ONGOING WORK TO BOOST THE ACT COMMUNITY SECTOR

The ACT Greens will invest in further phases of the Sector Sustainability program during the next term of Government. It will ensure more sustainable funding arrangements including infrastructure, workforce, and service co-design.

We will also undertake a review of all ACT Government owned buildings leased to community sector organisations to establish and implement an 10 year refurbishment strategy. This will include completing physical reviews of all relevant sites by 2027, with a focus on sites being fit-for-purpose and able to accommodate the increasing demand for services.

The ACT Greens will support community sector employee pay and conditions to be comparable with similar work in the private sector and public service. We will also ensure provisioned funding for community sector contracts aligns with workload growth - increasing funding to meet community demand, population growth and increased complexity of services as necessary.

Finally, we will provision a yearly population level adjustment to all community sector contracts. The ACT's population increases approximately 1.5% each year. This provision will ensure everyone has access to the essential services they need to live safer and happier in the ACT.

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Authorised by Pat Dollard for the ACT Greens

## INVESTMENT:

- \$1.5m to better manage the Sector Sustainability Project
- \$300,000 to review facilities owned by the ACT Government. Refurbishment costs will be determined by the review
- \$10.35m for population level contract increases

## AN ENDURING PARTNERSHIP

The community sector provides a unique set of skills to best support Canberrans in need. The ACT Greens will ensure the sector is supported, respected and valued as equal partners to help our whole community thrive.

We will knock down the many barriers that stand in the way of organisations to communicate frankly and fearlessly with government. We will streamline the commissioning process, contract management, reporting, data collection and governance to ensure the sector is supported to deliver the best possible outcomes for the community.

The ACT Greens will step up to genuinely support a sustainable sector and workforce. We'll do this through internal government reform to centralise and streamline the administrative barriers that restrict a thriving government-community sector relationship.

## OUR LONG TERM PLAN

The ACT Greens will establish the Office of the Coordinator General, Community Sector Partnerships which will sit

independent from all other Directorates, but in close partnership with them, including Treasury, to:

- Enhance data collection, analysis, and evaluation for informed decision making and accountability in resourcing the community sector. It will focus on unmet need and economic policy which recognises the savings to health and social services.
- Lead Sector Sustainability and be responsive to a dynamic environment which considers inflation, changes in industrial relations legislation, population growth and ageing infrastructure.
- Be the single point of contact to navigate and streamline relationships across all Directorates to reduce the administrative burden on community sector organisations. This will also facilitate a more consistent approach to commissioning, contract management and reporting.
- Work with the community sector to improve workforce capability, actively close the gender pay gap, and ensure fair pay and conditions that are comparable to similar work in the private sector and public service.
- Co-design best practice guidelines with and for the community sector to enhance governance, and provide ongoing consultation service to the sector to support including:
  - Support community sector incorporated associations to comply with the Associations Incorporation Act 1991

- Establish an intermediary function, applicable to ACT Government funded organisations, to address and resolve matters related to compliance with the Associations Incorporation Act 1991, the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth), or related financial management issues.

### **INVESTMENT:**

- **\$7.2m** to establish the Office of the Coordinator General, Community Sector Partnerships. The Office staff will be funded through redeployment of existing government resources.