



Media release

Over 50 community organisations ask Canberrans to ACTforCommunity this election – Campaign Launch

30 July 2024

The ACTforCommunity campaign launch is being held on Tuesday 30 July at 10am at a building typical of many community sector workplaces across the ACT. This is to highlight the need for more investment in the community sector and community service facilities.

“The ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS), the ACT Community Sector Peak bodies and many community organisations are united together to ACTforCommunity in the lead up to the ACT election. We are strongly advocating for a thriving and sustainable community sector accessible to all Canberrans,” said Dr Devin Bowles, CEO, ACTCOSS.

“ACTforCommunity is a powerful campaign aimed at informing Canberrans and all candidates of the need to increase funding for our vital community services. We already have over 50 community organisations supporting ACTforCommunity, and each day we have new community organisations joining us,” said Dr Bowles.

“The ACT community sector is facing a crisis, with some organisations at risk of closing their doors within the next 12 months. The crisis stems from the government’s failure to recognise the community’s needs and to increase funding in line with population growth, the cost-of-living crisis, and the rising demand for services,” said Dr Bowles.

“For years we have been absorbing and masking the real costs of our work through cross subsidisation and reliance on the good will and passion of staff and volunteers. But that house of cards is now collapsing under the sheer weight and complexity of these times. We can’t go on like this – in this election the time has come to appropriately resource the community organisations which Canberra people rely on for help, advice, representation and support”, said Craig Wallace, Acting CEO, Advocacy for Inclusion.

“In the lead up to the election, we hope all parties and candidates seeking seats in the Assembly will value the work done by people in community sector organisations. They can do this by tabling written, funded policies that lift resourcing over the next four years. This will ensure community organisations can meet demand for their services and be there for Canberrans when they need their services, for as long as they need them and at the intensity of need they desire and require. Anything less than that, falls well short of meeting the definition of the caring, socially inclusive city community politicians and would-be politicians so often spruik in their pitch for a seat in parliament” said Travis Gilbert, CEO, ACT Shelter.

“The value of community sector support to individual health and wellbeing cannot be understated. In the alcohol, tobacco and other drugs sector in the ACT our services are designed to be responsive to diverse and complex needs and are built on evidence, best practice and compassion. It is not too much to ask that the sector is properly resourced now and into the future to meet community need and remain sustainable as demand grows,” said Anita Mills, CEO, Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA).

“The Mental Health Community Coalition ACT supports this campaign because well-funded, well organised community services are critical in making a mentally healthy Canberra. And this isn’t just about people with a mental illness. It’s about all of us feeling like we are valued contributors to the place we live. Community organisations can do this, and can also take the pressure off other publicly funded health and other services,” said Dr Sebastian Rosenberg, Associate Professor and Outcomes

Development Specialist for the Mental Health Community Coalition ACT.

“The ACT Mental Health Consumer Network is joining the ACTforCommunity campaign to ensure that Canberra’s community services are properly funded and resourced. By standing together we can rise to the challenges of our day and ensure that the critical work of aiding and supporting Canberra’s communities continues into the years ahead,” said Dia Andrews, Policy Officer, ACT Mental Health Consumer Network.

“All Canberrans access services run by community organisations, it is vital we ensure the funding levels of these organisations reflect the Canberra of 2024 and beyond,” said Lisa Kelly, CEO Carers ACT.

“The right services delivered at the right time in the right space by the right person will ensure that Canberra remains one of the best cities in the world to live. Community organisations are essential services,” said Ms Kelly.

“We are calling on Canberrans to send a letter to their candidates to let them know how crucial it is to increase funding for our community services. They can use a prepared message available on our website – actforcommunity.com.au – or write their own. Every message counts. By joining our campaign, they are not just advocating for funding, they are standing up for the future of our community sector and the wellbeing of all Canberrans,” concluded Dr Devin Bowles.

Event details:

Where: ACT Shelter/ ATODA – 159 Maribyrnong Avenue Kaleen

When: 10am on Tuesday 30 July

Campaign website: <https://actforcommunity.com.au/>

**For more information or comment, please contact
Dr Devin Bowles, CEO of ACTCOSS, on 0413 435 080**