



STRONG COMMUNITY SECTOR

Valuing & Supporting the Community Sector

Investing in peak bodies, advocacy and service providers.

The ACT Greens greatly value the work of the community sector, and respect the services provided by peak bodies as well as advocacy and service organisations

> BETTER USING THE FUNDS FROM THE 0.34% LEVY

The community sector is one of the larger employers in the ACT, and is facing unparalleled challenges in terms of responding to the uncertainty of federal funding, and increasingly complex and growing client needs and client loads.

The ACT Greens are aware that a Community Services Industry Plan is being developed to support the ACT community sector through a period of significant structural adjustment, and that this plan will consider the best use of the existing funds raised by the 0.34% levy that has been imposed on the sector to support a range of work on improving efficiencies.

We will work closely with ACTCOSS and the other peak bodies to establish cross sectoral agreement on what support is needed to ensure meaningful, equitable and efficient outcomes for the sector.

> REFINING COMMUNITY GRANTS

We will work with the sector, and ACT Government

Procurement guidelines to move to longer term and more simple contracts for proven services and programs. Wherever possible, we will provide for at least three months notice of expiry of shorter term funding agreements to prevent uncertainty and allow for adequate planning.

We will also take an innovation approach to support short term grants specifically designed to test, trial and pilot small scale projects that allows services to be more innovative and creative.

> FUNDING NEW RESEARCH GRANTS

In the 2012 Parliamentary Agreement, the ACT Greens secured funding for a cross-sectoral consortium to explore a range of housing and homelessness issues, and saw four peak bodies work together in new and beneficial ways.

We believe that more opportunities for this type of properly resourced collaboration can help broaden the focus of the local research undertaken, and create a

fertile ground for new and emerging issues to be explored, similar to the successful commonwealth ARC linkage grants.

> **CROSS SECTOR SKILL SHARING**

The ACT is extremely lucky to be a small jurisdiction, where longstanding professional relationships can occur over years as people maintain their employment and interest in the community sector. However, there can at times be quite a distinction between Government and non-government understanding of issues and policy needs.

To improve the mutual professional respect and more in-depth understanding of both sector's policy drivers, the ACT Greens will actively pursue opportunities for staff across both sectors to share project work and support short term "community service providers in residence" programs that will break down some of the business as usual barriers.

The Greens will fund a dedicated coordinator to foster linkages between community organisations and government to identify opportunities and facilitate processes and agreements for skills exchange.

> **COMMUNITY PEAKS CABINET**

The ACT is home to many professional and well regarded local peak bodies, representing the diverse views of their members and advocating for thousands of Canberrans who are affiliated with these member groups. As such they hold a wealth of information and positive, constructive ideas, and should be respected for their unique perspective on the decisions of government which affect them and the broader community.

The ACT Greens respect and value the role of these sometimes "critical friends" - agencies funded by government to listen to the community, and who are regularly called on to provide advice to Ministers and the Assembly, support consultation mechanisms and

create a fertile ground for new and emerging issues submit territory wide budget submissions.

That is why we would host an annual Community Peaks Cabinet (*all peaks - Cons Council, ACTCOSS, Multi Culti Forum, ATSIEB, Youth Coalition etc, and All Ministers and Head of Service*) to listen to their feedback and engage with them on suggested improvements for interactions with government Directorates.

> **FUNDING ADVOCACY**

The broader community sector is generally funded by government to undertake specific functions, such as social support services, and yet are more and more being called to represent their sectors and their clients interests at steering committees, oversight groups and other fora - without these duties being explicitly referenced or resourced in their contracts. Attendance at these engagements necessitates time away from their core funded responsibilities, and the services have historically had to juggle priorities in order to attend and provide their sector knowledge and insight.

The ACT Greens believe that this work should be properly valued and resourced. We will provide a per diem sitting fee for representatives of small community organisations with funding under \$350,000 where their expertise is requested for the purposes of contributing to government policy. This will apply to organisations that are not funded to provide advocacy, but rather are funded to provide direct service to vulnerable people in our community. In this way, the voice of the community becomes recognised as a vital component of government policy development.