



Strategic Plan

2014 - 2017

Introduction

The 2014-2017 Strategic Plan outlines the way forward for ACOSS, setting the direction for us to deliver high quality policy and advocacy in the interests of those affected by poverty, disadvantage and inequality.

This Strategic Plan communicates our key priorities, outcomes and measures of success. It outlines the strategies with which ACOSS will achieve our four identified goals.

In order to deliver these strategies, ACOSS will increase the participation of people with lived experience of poverty or disadvantage in our policy and advocacy work. We will also continue to build strong partnerships with our members and other advocates, policy experts, partner organisations, government and policy-makers.

ACOSS Vision and Values

Who we are

The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) is the national voice in support of people affected by poverty, disadvantage and inequality; and the peak council for community services nationally.

Values

- We recognise the right of all people in Australia to opportunity, justice and equality.
- We believe in supporting people in Australia affected by poverty, disadvantage and inequality to achieve an adequate standard of living and the right to make the key decisions affecting their lives.
- We recognise the heritage, history and continuing cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and the need for action to advance the rights and self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- We value national policy solutions that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.
- We respect the human rights and the civil, social, economic and cultural contributions of all individuals and communities.

Our Vision

A fair, inclusive and sustainable Australia where all individuals and communities have the opportunities and resources they need to participate in and benefit from social and economic life.

How we work

- We value and are informed by the direct experiences of people affected by poverty and disadvantage; and by the social services and community organisations that support them.
- We develop credible policy solutions to address the causes of poverty and we advocate their implementation.
- We draw on available evidence to support our work, including the wealth of experience drawn from our members, advisors and people experiencing poverty.
- We hold high standards for our research and analysis.
- We support the sustainability and development of the community services sector, recognising that our members are at the forefront of responding to poverty and disadvantage and share our vision of a fair and inclusive society.
- We act ethically as an independent public voice.
- We are non-party political, working across the Federal Parliament including with the Government, the Opposition and the cross bench to raise awareness and to support informed debate.
- We are transparent and consult widely through our membership and relationships with other advocates, policy experts and partner organisations.

Policy Priority Areas

ACOSS' work is focused on the following priority policy areas:

- Income support and employment
- Tax reform
- Housing and homelessness
- Community Sector

ACOSS also engages in policy and advocacy activities across a range of other policy areas, working in alliance with others wherever possible and strategic.

Goals and Strategies

ACOSS has identified 4 strategic goals. We will regularly review our progress against these goals, drawing on input from members and other key stakeholders; and will report against these goals in annual reports and at other opportunities.

The ACOSS Board has also recognised the need to reform its own structure to better engage with a changing and challenging public policy world. This Strategic Plan identifies a set of strategic reform activities under each of the four goals, to be completed during the Plan's timeframe. These reforms are focused on one aim: to ensure ACOSS maximises its positive influence on public policy in the interests of people affected by poverty, disadvantage and inequality across Australia.

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Goal 1: Increase our impact on key policy decisions and actions

Strategies:

- Lead and support action to advance the adoption of equitable policy solutions by governments and other decision-makers.
- Build strategic alliances with key decision-makers to directly influence policy decisions and outcomes.
- Ensure a strong and effective media profile as an advocate in support of people affected by poverty, across a diverse range of media.
- Build ACOSS' campaigning capacity to mobilise the community in support of key objectives, including through the use of online tools.

Goal 3: Support and grow the effectiveness of community service organisations

Strategies:

- Understand the national issues impacting on the sector and its capacity to assist people in need. Work with the sector, the Federal Government and other stakeholders to implement strategies that address these issues.
- Develop the Australian Community Sector Survey as a key conduit for information about the lived experiences of people affected by poverty and the organisations that support them.
- Strengthen community development as the framework through which ACOSS develops and advocates policies to reduce poverty and disadvantage.
- Build on the commitment to civil society, ethics and values that characterises the community sector through our leadership on policy issues.
- Foster the capacity of the community sector to improve public policy outcomes.

Goal 2: Develop evidence and experience based solutions

Strategies:

- Develop effective mechanisms to hear, understand and reflect the lived experience of people affected by poverty or disadvantage and facilitate their ability to participate in the development of policy and advocacy.
- Ensure that our mechanisms for consultation with members and other key stakeholders are robust, inclusive and respectful.
- Collaborate with academics and other researchers to produce and promote research that contributes to public understanding of poverty, its causes, impacts and solutions.
- Draw on international and Australian research and experience to develop new policy solutions that influence public policy to reduce poverty and inequality.

Goal 4: Build our organisation to be dynamic and sustainable

Strategies:

- Undertake strategic governance reforms to ensure effective governance of ACOSS.
- Modernise the basis of membership in order to increase engagement of citizens and organisations committed to ACOSS' objectives.
- Diversify and strengthen ACOSS' resource base to support our work in priority areas.
- Develop workplace policies and procedures to ensure a well-managed, supportive and rewarding workplace.

Website: www.acoss.org.au

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