

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

70 years fighting for fairness



70TH ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17



SACOSS

*South Australian Council
of Social Service*

OUR VISION

Justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians.

OUR MISSION

SACOSS does not accept poverty, inequity or injustice.

We will be a powerful and representative voice that leads and supports our community to take actions that achieve our vision.

We will hold to account governments, business and communities for actions that disadvantage vulnerable South Australians.

OUR GOALS

All social and economic policy in SA ensures all South Australians have their basic human needs met.

South Australia has strong, cohesive community services and health sectors driving social change.

SACOSS is a sustainable, independent organisation equipped to support the community services and health sectors to achieve our vision.

South Australian Council of Social Service 69th Annual Report 2016-17
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JOINT CHAIRS' REPORT



By incoming Chair David Panter and outgoing Chair Helen Connolly

The 2016/17 year was one of renewal and change for SACOSS. There were significant changes at the Board level with the election of a new Chair in David Panter. As outgoing Chair, Helen Connolly had served for six years and believed that new leadership at the Board level would be an asset in driving a renewed Strategic Plan for new times. Helen and David jointly prepared the following report attempting to capture a good sense of the year in which they shared this responsibility.

During the first half of the year the Board, Policy Council, and sector and community more broadly were focused on the implications for inequality arising from the disruption occurring in our technological, political and social worlds. The pace of this change is having a disproportionately negative impact on disadvantaged and low income South Australians. Our traditional advocacy and campaigning strategies

needed to be reviewed through this lens.

With the ever present challenge of ensuring SACOSS remained relevant, representative and impactful, the Board decided that SACOSS should embark on a significant renewal of our Strategic Plan. The process included the Chair and CEO hosting a series of conversations/provocations with members, stakeholders and thought leaders.

These sessions were intended to deliver the Board and sector some up to date understandings of the political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal landscape impacting on SACOSS as an organisation, on our members in their roles as civil society and most importantly on low income earners. Alongside these conversations we undertook traditional stakeholder surveys and interviews with 'critical friends' from government, politics and the sector. At the culmination of this process SACOSS had a rich and vast pool of data at its disposal for the new chair and Board to utilise in its strategic planning.

The Board was supported in the process by Penny Lynn from Ignis Consulting. Together we waded through the development of a sharper Statement of Purpose to better identify the ways we will achieve our longstanding vision of justice, opportunity and shared wealth. This vision is underpinned by a series of principles and values that underpin our work and enacted through three strategic goals: Developing a fair and just community for South Australians; Cultivating a thriving community sector assisting people to address poverty and disadvantage; and Building a healthy, resilient and sustainable organisation in SACOSS.

The new plan is enclosed as a lift-out in the Annual Report (if you are reading this online or if your copy is missing, please see the Strategic Plan on our website www.sacoss.org.au), and under the stewardship of the new Chair, Board and Policy Council teams there is a strong foundation for SACOSS' continued growth and development.

Another key action taken to refresh SACOSS' image and capacity this year was to undertake a major renovation of our offices and community rooms at Marjorie Black House. This was a significant undertaking and accomplished with the minimum disruption to our outward-facing research, advocacy and representation. Indeed our staff are to be congratulated for embracing some discomfort

BOARD MEMBERS 2016-17

Helen Connolly Chair, to October 2016

David Panter Chair, elected at AGM 2016

Emma Louise Crosby Treasurer

Nicole Chaplin

Matthew Woodward

Paul Scully to June 2017

Mel Ottaway elected AGM 2016

Rosemary Warmington elected AGM 2016

during the renovations and we are confident that the resulting improvements provide much more pleasant and functional workspaces and are likely to remain so for many years to come.

As you will see in this Annual Report our work has been as diverse and challenging as ever. This year we've had a major focus on issues such as: child protection reform arising from the outcomes of the Nyland Royal Commission; the continuing absence of investments in prevention and primary health despite the State Government's "Transforming Health" (aka hospitals) process; the impact on affordability resulting from reliability and security issues as our energy system transitions to a zero emissions future; the over-representation of Aboriginal people in our health, corrections, child protection and youth detention systems; arguing the state-based energy concession be reformed from a fixed amount to a percentage of the bill; proposing realistic reform of the tax system to improve fairness at both state and federal levels; prosecuting the case for an large increase to basic income support payments such as Newstart and Youth Allowance; contemplating the impacts of climate change for vulnerable community members; understanding the consequences for individuals and service organisations as consumer-directed care emerges across the aged care and disability sectors; fighting for better contracting arrangements across the entire not-for-profit sector; joining ACOSS and the whole COSS network in representations to our federal politicians on a wide range of issues such as improving housing affordability, addressing homelessness, detailing the impacts of the Robo-debt fiasco and the roll-out of the cashless welfare card, and responding to calls for increased competition in human services; exploring and understanding the consequences of digital disadvantage across the state; and so on it goes.

During the year we also spent time reviewing and refreshing the way we communicate, recognising that this remains a key element in ensuring the issues we are most concerned about can be taken up by more than stakeholders already connected to our work.

We are deeply aware of the critical importance of ensuring the materials we send are always relevant, and easy to distribute and stand above the crowd given the huge amount of information distributed to most people these days. Over the coming year we are moving from our tradition of publishing and distributing SACOSS News on a quarterly basis to producing an electronic update of our work on a monthly basis, called SACOSS Snapshot. This will have a mix of content reflecting our most recent work, and be easy to forward on to others who might share an interest.

As we head towards another election cycle there

SACOSS congratulates outgoing Chair Helen Connolly who was appointed SA's first Commissioner for Children and Young People in March 2017.



can be no doubt one of the most important things SACOSS will be doing is to ensure the needs of people who experience poverty, inequality and injustice in our state, along with the interests of sector organisations who support many of these people on a daily basis, are widely understood and actively reflected in the policies all parties bring to the electorate.

SACOSS needs access to resources and the continuing support of all our members and supporters in order to be able to mount a credible campaign on these issues, and we hope you can find space, time and resources to support us. Last election we saw some significant policies adopted because of the work we did in the lead-up period. This election will be hotly contested and thus offers us a real opportunity to drive policies that advantage people who might currently be experiencing a very hard time.

In closing can we just say that like most high-impact organisations, we couldn't do this without the people who devote time to the work through our Board, our Policy Council and the talented group of people who form the secretariat. We want to make particular mention of Libby Connell, who recently retired from her extended stay as our Finance and Office Coordinator and we extend our thanks for her support and our very best wishes in retirement.

David Panter

Helen Connolly

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



Ross Womersley

Like all years at SACOSS this was another big one. We had too many things to worry about and nowhere near the time and resources to do justice to most of them.

But we continue to work at frantic pace, determined to ensure we get the best outcomes for people struggling against the forces of poverty and disadvantage in SA.

You'll see reference to some of the highlights in both the Joint Chairs' and Treasurer's reports so I'll try not to be repetitive.

2016/17 was a year when we were outward looking as well as reflecting on our practice – searching for the recipes that might help us forge a stronger future.

We did this as we worked towards the review of our Strategic Plan. In preparation, we read widely, hosted a series of conversations, and engaged with a wide range of our stakeholders – both familiar and some less so. And out of this we emerged with some consensus. Despite our best efforts, and indeed those of many others, inequality was growing and in a whole lot of different arenas. There was still much work to be done.

You don't have to look too far to find evidence of the fact that over the last few years the political discourse around people experiencing hardship in Australia has hardened. The most recent rounds have involved direct attacks on people who are unemployed and in need of income support, and this comes after years of serious nastiness directed at those asylum seekers who have sought to arrive on our shores by boat.

Many of our political leaders have worked extremely hard to prosecute the idea that our welfare system is filled with "leaners" not "lifters". That the unemployed are all there because they are simply lazy, don't want to work, and get far too much in the form of income support benefits which they choose to waste on things like smokes, drugs and booze.

There's no discussion about the systemic economic issues that drive unemployment, the limited support to build motivation, poor opportunities and high costs involved to develop needed skills, the very

high percentage of unemployed people who already undertake part-time or casual work, or the chronic misery that quickly emerges with repeated rejection and missed opportunities. Nor is there any acknowledgement that a member of almost every Australian household relies on access to the welfare system at some point in their lives, that the welfare bill is actually dominated by and expanding because of payments for the aged pension or that in real terms the Newstart and Youth Allowance have not increased for more than a decade and that realistic analyses of the cost of living conclude that they are effectively unliveable.

Instead this year we saw the introduction of the appalling "Robo-debt" regime – an automated data matching program which we understand the federal government was advised from the outset was flawed – the extension of the cashless welfare card to new areas, and repeated attempts by the federal government to introduce a range of zombie measures that would reduce the meagre entitlements and introduce drug testing of beneficiaries designed to make remaining a welfare recipient more difficult.

So through the year across the whole COSS network and in support of ACOSS, it's been work in this space that has attracted a lot of our attention. While we have successfully defended implementation of some of the most harsh measures and despite support from a wide range of sectors including from business groups, we cannot yet celebrate agreement to move on increasing the rates of these base allowances.

What we can celebrate though is the early work we and others have done to help the voices of people who are living with and have direct experience of poverty to shine forward and be amplified. With this in mind this year we have formed a unique partnership with the Anti-Poverty Network SA to help better connect our work directly with the voices of people who can communicate the impacts of their circumstances first-hand.

We can also celebrate work we have done on state tax reform which resulted in the government taking up recommendations to implement a new point of placement sports betting tax, which while modest at present we expect will become more substantial as the growth of this type of betting continues seemingly exponentially.

And while the state government is yet to move from having a fixed-rate energy concession to a percentage-based one fit for purpose, we should celebrate the fact they did move to index all concessions on an annual basis in future.

Similarly, while we can't celebrate the end of massive energy price increases, we definitely should celebrate the ground-breaking work SACOSS led in contesting SAPN's regulatory asset base proposal which did result in real savings to all consumers.

We should also celebrate the work we did in analysing and challenging SA Water's regulatory proposal as well as work done building a deeper understanding of the cost of living implications associated with the expanding digital divide.

Likewise while we cannot rejoice at having the best possible legislative base on which to ensure real reform of the child protection system, we should welcome the strong alliance and influence we brought to bear which ensured a much better piece of legislation has been implemented than originally envisaged and a new piece of legislation focused on prevention and early intervention is in the pipeline.

We should also celebrate the role we helped to play which resulted in the appointment of a Mental Health Commissioner and work to develop a comprehensive new plan for mental health across SA, as well as the government's decision to finally move to appoint a Commissioner for Children and Young People.

These are just a few of the things we can lay claim to this year and despite being a bit disappointed because we haven't kicked as many goals as we would have liked, I am extremely proud of the work our secretariat, Board and Policy Council continue to do, helping make progress on these kinds of issues.

One of the other things I am very proud of is the work we did through the year to lift the quality of our offices and community meeting spaces. I hope that you enjoy what we've done with the place and that it adds positively to the image we convey – even if there are still some who lament the loss of the table tennis boardroom table.

Of course this year also saw us welcoming David Panter to the role of Chair (who's day job is as CEO of ECH, one of SA's leading aged care service providers) transitioning from Helen Connolly (who much to our

delight has been appointed as the new Commissioner for Children and Young People). It's my view that this transition has gone extremely well although I am confident David wasn't quite sure what he was getting himself into. I thank them both for their support to me in my role, and indeed record my appreciation for all members of our Board and Policy Council.

This year also saw significant transitions in our staff team. We farewelled Vivian Clark, Victoria Morton, Eliza Schioldann, and Phil Saunders who left to pursue other opportunities, while at the same time we welcomed Gabrielle Bond, Georgina Morris, Rebecca Law and Lucyna Goodall to our team.

I would like to record my great thanks to the terrific team who continue to deliver outstanding work in support of our mission and to extend my best wishes to everyone who for different reasons has left for new horizons, especially to Vivian for her terrific work as our inaugural Events Coordinator.

That said I also want to record my thanks here to the outstanding Libby Connell, who technically retired in the 2017-18 financial year after more than 13 years in her roles with SACOSS. Libby has been an outstanding servant to and guardian of SACOSS finances and administration, and we will miss her presence and living memory. We wish her the very best that retirement has to offer.

As the rest of this report clearly illustrates there have been dozens of other issues that have arisen through the year, many of which relate to the lives of people we all worry about and others that relate to the sustaining and enabling of the work of our member organisations and the support they provide to people across the state. I look forward to working with all of you as we head towards another election continuously trying to leverage the biggest advantages for those people who currently are faced with injustice, unfairness and inequality.

In solidarity,



Ross

2016-17 IN NUMBERS



1

Major SACOSS conference: the Vulnerability and Affordability Conference 2016: Energy, Water and Telecommunications

Attended by

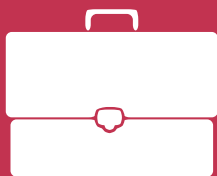
120

Delegates representing industry, government, and the community services sector



17

Sector development events



19

Board & Policy Council meetings



18

Submissions produced



17

Reports produced, including

7 Energy and water reports

4 Cost of Living Updates

3 Major tax reports

1 Telecommunications report

1 State Budget Submission

1 State Budget Snapshot



5

projects recommended to the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion for funding under the Customer Advocacy and Research Fund (CARF)



97

Room bookings (since renovations finished in January 2017)



52

SACOSS Small Change 1 hr radio shows with

110 interviews and
100 podcasts produced



1096

People who receive our eBulletin and Snapshot



22.2K

Tweets from the @SACOSS account since we joined Twitter in 2009



600

South Australian consumers surveyed on their perception and experiences of water and sewerage services

70 YEARS OF SACOSS

HISTORY

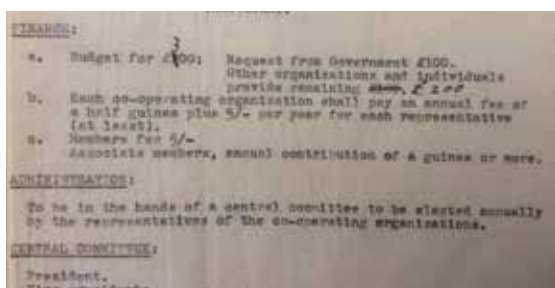
SACOSS was formed in 1946 as a broadened, restructured and renamed version of a Youth Welfare Coordinating Council that had developed earlier in the decade. SACOSS was, and remains, an umbrella organisation with a membership consisting of organisations active in the community and social services field, along with individual members.

Through a range of committees and working parties SACOSS tackled many issues and played an integral role in the development of organisations such as Good Neighbour Council, Mental Health Association, Shelter, Community Information Strategies Australia, Volunteering SA, Citizens Advice Bureau, Welfare Rights Centre and Community Employees Association.

Originally records were kept at the homes of committee members before an office was set up in Grenfell Street. After several moves, including locations in Morphet Street and Waymouth Street, SACOSS settled into the Torrens Building on Victoria Square in July 1997. In May 2007 SACOSS moved to Marjorie Black House in Unley.

From the SACOSS Constitution

Each co-operating organization shall pay an annual fee of a half guinea plus 5/- per year for each representative (at least)



Selected highlights in our history

- > Actively promoting “Multiculturalism” well before this term was used by promoting acceptance of non-English speaking post war migrants, including establishing the Good Neighbour Council in SA
- > Talking publicly about mental health issues and encouraging help services that assisted people with mental illness to be supported to remain actively involved in their local communities. SACOSS enabled the establishment of the Mental Health Association, which then worked with Adelaide Central Mission and the RAH to establish the Lifeline telephone suicide prevention counselling service, the second such service in the world which will celebrate 55 years of assistance in 2018
- > Advocating for sex education in schools and services for single mothers
- > Helping to establish Service to Youth Council, one of the world’s first organisations to actively develop and apply streetwork/detached youth work approaches to engaging with marginalised and disaffected young people
- > Writing and providing clear, easy to apply handbooks on a wide range of aspects of community sector management
- > Helping the community services sector to understand and use information technology, specifically through the project that became CISSA (Community Information Support SA)
- > First raising the spectre of youth homelessness in 1978, and other emerging homeless issues, also leading to the formation of Shelter SA
- > Supporting innovative services to assist people with a disability, including establishing the Phoenix Society sheltered workshop.

SACOSS FAREWELLS DAPHNE GUM (1916-2017)

SACOSS lost a great friend and generous supporter in March 2017 with the death of Daphne Gum.

Daphne was a teacher and leader, as well as a strong advocate for people with disability, for people with mental illness, and for everyone's right to an education. Daphne Gum turned 100 on January 24, 2016 and was honoured with the naming of the Daphne Gum Quiet Room at Marjorie Black House.

She remains an inspiration to many and is deeply missed.



SACOSS INITIATED ORGANISATIONS (highlighted still in operation)

1948 Marriage Guidance Council
(now Relationships Australia SA)

1949 Good Neighbour Council

Early 1950s proposal for Civilian Maimed and Limbless Association

1951 Coordinating Council for the Aged

1951 inaugurated April 1956 Australian Council of Social Service ACOSS (partners with other COSSs)

1956 South Australian Association for Mental Health

1958 Citizen's Advice Bureau (in conjunction with SA Association for Mental Health)

1958 Phoenix Society which amalgamated with Bedford Industries to form Bedford

1962 SA Foundation on Alcoholism

1963 preliminary steps to formation of a Multiple Sclerosis Club

1968 Combined Charity Card and Gift Shop

1975 Darwin Disaster Welfare Centre

1975 Combined Committee of Self Help Groups

1975 planning for Family and Child Welfare Council of Australia - SA Branch

1975 Shelter SA

1975 Inner City Youth Workers Network

1975 participated in preliminary discussions on the operation, membership and development of the Council to Homeless Persons

1976 Cresco Self Help Centre (Combined Self-Help Groups Committee)

1977 Self Help Adult Unemployed Norwood

1977 assistance in the formation of the state organisation of Regional Councils for Social Development

1981 Community Information Support Service SA (now Connecting Up Australia: known as Community Information Strategies Australia 1996-2008) (joint project SACOSS, Citizens Advice Bureau, Advisory Centres Association of SA)

1982 Volunteer Centre (now Volunteering SA)

1982 Voice of the Elderly (VOTE)

1985 SACOSS Whyalla (merged with SACOSS 1997)

1989 Community Employers Association

1991 Northern Suburbs Family Resources Centre

1993 launch of Social Justice Research Foundation (partners with United Trades and Labour Council, Centre for Labour Studies Adelaide University)

1993 participation in Coalition for Export and Enterprise: changed name to Australian Care and Community International Alliance

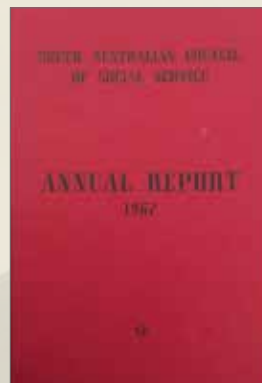
2001/02 Justice for Refugees South Australia

2002 Health Consumers Alliance of SA

2003 Health Reform SA

2003/04 Mental Health Coalition of SA

TO CELEBRATE 70 YEARS OF SACOSS WE ASKED PAST EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS TO SHARE SOME MEMORIES AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM THEIR TIME AT THE HELM.



"For much of the 1980-85 period the COSS movement sought to argue the case for strengthening social welfare in economic terms.

Bob Hawke's National Economic Summit in 1983 included ACOSS, then chaired by Bruce McKenzie, as a delegate. Bruce drew together the COSSs to support the position statement presented by ACOSS, and through it won enough credibility for the social welfare sector to be given a place on the Economic Planning Advisory Council. It was a significant win at the time, which strengthened the sector for years to come in national social and economic policy debate.

Then there was the 1985 National Tax Summit- a key issue after the Economic Summit. The sector found itself having to develop not only its own expertise in this field, but also the skills of explaining to its membership and to the wider community why tax reform was so significant to the future health of Australia's social welfare system. It was a significant challenge but one which brought several Councils together in formulating a national position.

The most tangible outcome was a publication, Understanding Tax Reform, which outlined to people with no specialist economic knowledge some of the concepts being used in the tax reform debate. The publication was written jointly by SACOSS, NCOSS and ACOSS - I've forgotten in what proportion, but have a vivid memory of an editorial meeting in Sydney in which we cheerfully, but passionately horse-traded bits of text and argued over words for a whole day.

This was inter-COSS cooperation at its best, but we still had much to learn about making a more solid community impact with such publications. If we'd worried less about the text, and more about nuts-and-bolts matter such as affordable print runs and maximising distribution, we would probably have been more effective in meeting our original public education goals!"

Lange Powell, SACOSS Executive Director 1979-1985

"One of the most significant changes in human service provision since 1990 has been the growth of for-profit service management - in competition with the charity and community sector.

Through the 1980s there had been a rapid expansion of funding to the charity and community sector to provide community-based childcare, disability services, aged residential care, and home and community care. For-profit service provision was almost non-existent and mainly limited to small operators in the nursing home sector. Consumer protection was central to the funding contracts along with the assumption that charity and community management were best placed to prioritise consumer needs and rights.

However, since that time funding models have changed to expand for-profit services in child care, aged care, training and employment support.

For-profit retirement villages were one of the first private sector investments in service provision, and by the mid 1980s they began to emerge on the market.

We set up a retirement villages working party at SACOSS in 1986 to look at ways to ensure consumer rights could be protected.

A well-attended workshop showed that there was strong interest in the way retirement villages would develop in SA. The resulting consumer protections in the Retirement Villages Act 1987 are a credit to SACOSS and to Margaret Hunter who saw the work through to completion when she became director. SA has not had the same level of consumer problems that are consistently being reported about east coast major village chains.

Another priority was to expand the role and repertoire of the SACOSS training unit, in getting much needed training into the sector especially in the areas of management, and promotion of consumer dignity and rights.

With the breadth of scope that SACOSS has, there will always be missed opportunities. In hindsight, the 1986 missed opportunity was the inability to convert a research grant on fundraising options to help set up a statewide United Way."

Helen Lindon, SACOSS Executive Director 1985-1987

"SACOSS was always at the forefront of leading the sector to challenge and think about the importance of community services as a vital part of the economy, and as part of the investment in human services which make a difference to the daily lives of many people whose lives are impacted by economic and social factors.

Whilst taxation and other big picture policies (employment, economic development etc) remain critical to most Australians, so do policies, programs and services aimed at supporting people and families who are dealing with ill health, disability, ageing, carer roles, unemployment and being a sole parent.

SACOSS led innovative work on third sector strengthening long before the wider COSS movement embraced it. From the mid 1980s right through the 1990s it led the sector's discussion on NGO training, strong governance, and management support. From very early it was a pioneer in mental health service delivery and service reforms, and then on supporting the mental health consumer movement. It pushed for partnership reforms to the funding relationships between government and non-government services. It was way ahead of its time on those reforms.

I find myself 22 years after SACOSS dealing with these same issues in an international context in PNG. But here the demands for partnerships are coming from government at all levels, as the people of PNG understand fully the role of civil society, the importance of communities, and the value of finding shared solutions."

Elizabeth Morgan, SACOSS Executive Director 1991-1995

"It was early on a very cold July day in the euphemistically named 'Board Room', level 2, 194 Morphett St in the early 1980's, at the SACOSS Executive Meeting that I had that flash of realisation: Economics is the dominant paradigm of society, and to influence public policy, I had to better understand economics..

I was 'chuffed' in 1997 when, after presenting the new improved SACOSS Budget Submission to Shadow Treasurer Kevin Foley, he leaned back in his chair and asked who had "done your economic modelling?" I wanted to say that it was undertaken by the extensive SACOSS Economics and Modelling Unit – the entire SACOSS staff team being a small group – but responded by saying that "it was a team effort". Recognition of SACOSS work is rarely given directly.

It was the era of the banana republic, national 'competition policy,' of ANTS (A New Tax System) and making NGOs more efficient through funder-purchaser-provider models and the rise of tendering in our sector to replace grants.

Despite the rise of economic rationalism, SACOSS kept talking truth with and for low income and disadvantaged people, using the language of economics as necessary.

One great idea from the time was to privatise the Electricity Trust of South Australia – at least that way electricity would be cheap in 20 years' time.

Still, at least the Crows won Premierships back then."

Mark Henley, SACOSS Executive Director 1995-1998

"To state the obvious, SACOSS is invaluable for its independence from any one interest, its broad membership base and that it creates a safe space to seed and conduct public policy reform. It has spawned more than 70 coalitions focused on significant social issues, only some of which endure now but all of which conducted important policy reform of their time. The Mental Health Coalition of SA and the Health Consumers Alliance commenced from SACOSS roots in the early years of this century. As did Justice for Refugees SA, which has recently been resurrected. The courage and conviction of the elected members and staff of SACOSS gave these organisations the foundation they needed to launch into valued activity and advocacy."

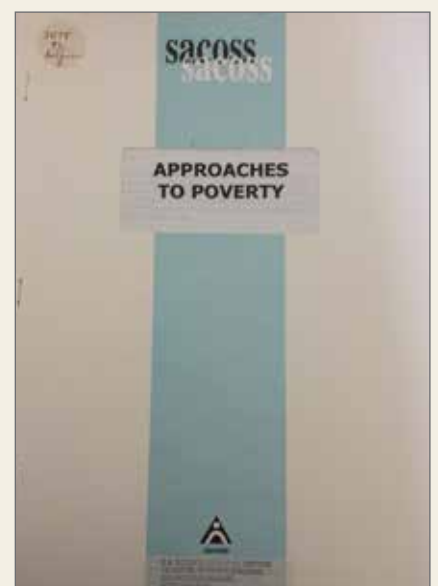
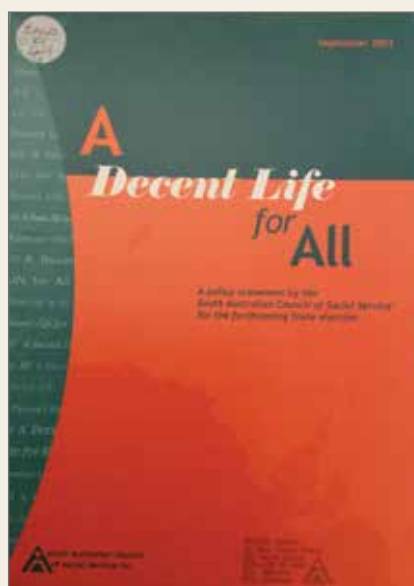
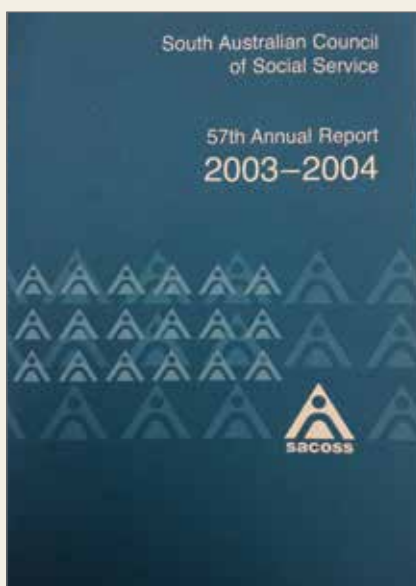
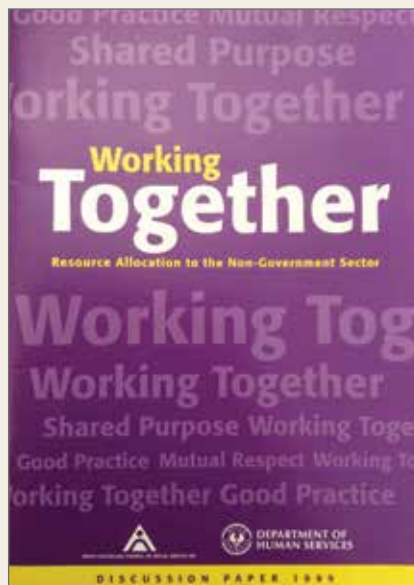
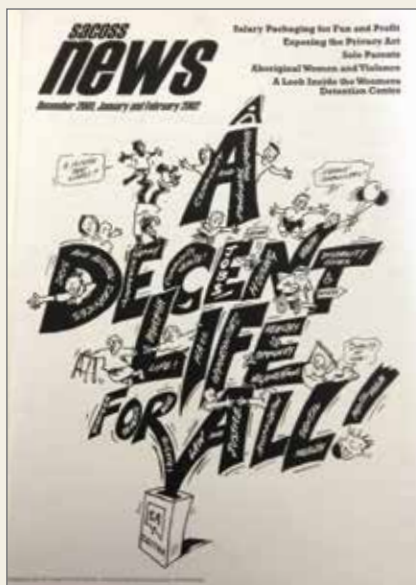
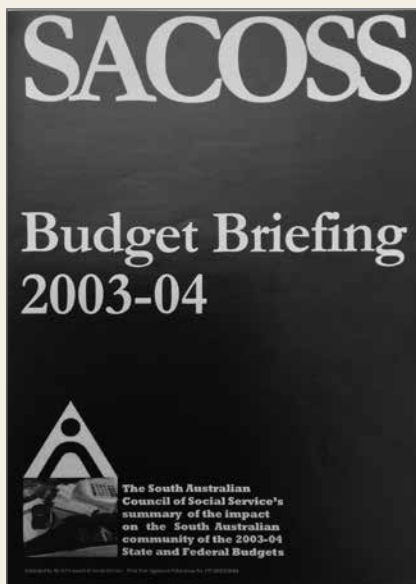
Pam Simmons, SACOSS Executive Director 1998-2004

"I was deeply honoured to have served the SACOSS community for 5 years. In that time the collective community that is SACOSS achieved many great things through a deep and abiding commitment to social justice. We started the campaign for better wages and conditions for workers in the community sector, we fought against unfair electricity pricing, for gambling reform, against prison overcrowding and fundamentally fought for justice and opportunity for those most vulnerable in our community.

A key highlight for me during my time was the development of the SACOSS Blueprint for the Eradication of Poverty, the concept of an anti-poverty plan for SACOSS which had been secured by my wonderful predecessor Pam Simmons. The document involved reaching out to every member of the organisation in a detailed and comprehensive consultation over many, many months. Bob Hawke presided over the launch of the consultation to speak of his commitment to eradicating child poverty.

I was never more honoured than presenting that report to lifelong stalwart of SACOSS Barbara Garrett, an amazing and talented woman whose wise counsel I miss to this day. SACOSS is a fantastic organisation and I am so proud to have been a part of it."

Karen Grogan, SACOSS Executive Director 2004-2009



FULFILLING OUR ROLE AS A PEAK BODY

SACOSS is the peak body for the non-government health and community services sector in South Australia. As such, SACOSS undertakes the key peak body roles at the highest level and will focus on issues that affect vulnerable and disadvantaged people across the state, or which impact on all health and community services sector organisations.

SACOSS' peak body roles:

- > **Representation** – speaking in all matters as the peak body on behalf of the sector
- > **Research, Policy Development, Advice and Advocacy** – giving voice to the interests of vulnerable and disadvantaged people
- > **Information Dissemination to the Sector** – filtering and prioritising government information and regulation to ensure the sector is informed about changes and policies relevant for them
- > **Information Dissemination to the Community** – public education about poverty and disadvantage and/or the role of the sector in community development and supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people
- > **Sector Development** – primarily through improving the regulatory regime to allow the sector to operate with maximum efficiency in addressing the needs of vulnerable and other disadvantaged people, and through supporting the spreading of innovative ideas and best practices across the sector.

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RESEARCH, POLICY DEVELOPMENT, ADVOCACY

RESEARCH

POLICY
DEVELOPMENT
AND ADVOCACY

RESEARCH, POLICY DEVELOPMENT, ADVOCACY

SACOSS undertakes research, policy development and advocacy to give a voice to the interests of vulnerable and disadvantaged people, and for the non-government community services sector that supports those people. Alongside the specific key issues featured in this Annual Report, SACOSS also undertook policy and advocacy on a number of one-off issues, as well as the set-piece activities that go across a range of issues.

The major set-pieces included the State Budget Submission and State Budget commentary, Anti-Poverty Week awareness-raising, and our ongoing involvement in the Human Services Partnership Forum.

ANTI-POVERTY WEEK

Each year SACOSS is involved in Anti-Poverty Week, which is the week surrounding the United Nations' International Anti-Poverty Day (17 October).

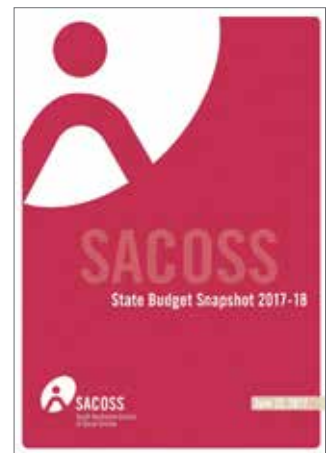
Anti-Poverty Week aims to strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty in Australia and internationally. Individuals, communities, organisations and governments are encouraged to take part in action to address poverty, and typically a burst of activity and events occur.

In 2016, SACOSS was again part of the SA Anti-Poverty Week State Facilitation Group which meets on a regular basis throughout the year. Made up of individuals from our sector and various levels of government and industry, the group provides a coordinated effort, mirrored in other states, to encourage and support others to engage with the week.

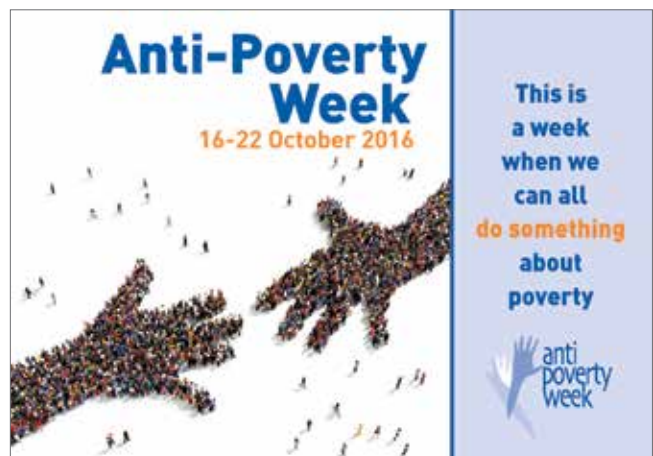
State Budget Submission 2017-18



State Budget Snapshot 2017-18



Anti-Poverty Week



RESEARCH

REPORTS

SACOSS publishes significant research reports on issues affecting the community and social services sector, or which impact on vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

Unlike submissions, which can be a response to formal government processes, research reports usually arise from issues identified as important by the sector. In some cases the research might be specifically funded by government, while in other cases (eg Cost of Living reports and Anti-Poverty Week Statements) we have developed the research from our own resources.

June 2017

- > No Option: Public Opinion and the Prospects of Tax Reform in South Australia
- > Annual SACOSS Briefing to the Minister for Communities and Social Inclusion: Water Pricing Issues Affecting South Australian Consumers
- > Regulatory Arrangements for Embedded Networks: Snapshot of stakeholder positions
- > SACOSS State Budget Snapshot 2017

May 2017

- > Reality Check: Public Perceptions of South Australian Government Expenditure and Waste
- > Cost of Living Update No. 30, March Qtr 2017: Energy Snapshot

April 2017

- > Unfinished Business: Two Years On From South Australia's Tax Review
- > Review of the Australian Energy Regulator's and Essential Services Commission of Victoria's Frameworks for Customers Facing Payment Difficulties

March 2017

- > Cost of Living Update No.29, December Qtr 2016
- > SACOSS State Budget Submission 2017-18

February 2017

- > Looking Around the Corner: A discussion on Current South Australian Power System Risks

January 2017

- > Better Solutions for Helping Customers with Financial Difficulties: Energy and Water

December 2016

- > The Retail and Exemption Framework: Emerging Issues for Consumers

November 2016

- > Connectivity Costs: Telecommunications Affordability for Low Income Australians
- > Cost of Living Update No. 28, September Qtr 2016

October 2016

- > Demand Tariffs in South Australia: Report of Consumer Consultations

August 2016

- > Cost of Living Update No. 27, June Qtr 2016: Financial Pressures Survey

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND ADVOCACY

POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP 2016-2017 FINANCIAL YEAR

The SACOSS Policy Council is drawn from the SACOSS membership and helps to plan and develop key areas of social policy development work. Policy Council members hold office for two-year terms and are elected in different categories set out in the SACOSS Constitution.

Category Description	Person Elected / Organisation
Chair	Helen Connolly (to December 16) David Panter (from December 16)
Board Rep	Nicole Chaplin
Reps of Peak Orgs	Rob Martin Child and Family Welfare Association of SA (from November 2016) Geoff Harris Mental Health Coalition of SA Gill McFadyen Community Centres SA (to October 2016) Alison Harker Community Centres SA (from November 2016) Anne Bainbridge Youth Affairs Council of SA Michael White South Australian Network of Drug and Alcohol Services Carmel Rosier Community Housing Council
Reps of Large NGOs	Kathy Binks Uniting Communities Helen Lockwood Lutheran Community Care (to October 2016) Susan Errington Legal Services Commission of SA Lee-Anne Gassner Baptist Care (SA) (to December 2016) Sue Thomas Junction Australia (from April 2017) Jane Longbottom Individual Member to October 2016, Life Without Barriers rep. (to May 2017)
Reps of Small NGOs	Nicole Chaplin St John's Youth Services Michael Cousins Health Consumers Alliance of SA (to October 2016) Louise Kelly OARS Community Transitions Mark Waters Reconciliation SA Michelle Adams Australian Association of Social Workers (from November 2016)
Reps of Aboriginal NGOs	Lyn Jones Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (to Feb 17)
Reps of CALD NGOs	Italia Mignone Multicultural Aged Care Kristin Johansson Multicultural Communities Council of SA
Reps of non-metro NGOs	Anthea Pavy UnitingCare Wesley Country SA Rob Foggo ac.care
Individual Members	Phillip Beddall Paul Laris Jane Mussared Pas Forgione (from February 2017)

Proxies

Sarah Warren Uniting Communities; **Helene Schulz** Lutheran Community Care; **Deb Potter** Baptist Care; **Andrew Drummond** Uniting Communities; **Hee Young Lim** Multicultural Communities Council of SA



KEY POLICY ISSUES

SACOSS has focused on several key issues in 2016-17, with particular attention on digital inclusion

Digital inclusion

This year saw SACOSS' concern with telecommunications affordability (see separate section in this Annual Report) develop into a broader concern around digital inclusion.

Digital inclusion is about ensuring that every Australian is able to make full use of digital technologies – to access education, online businesses and services, contact family and friends, and participate in the digital economy. It is more than just telecommunications as digital platforms are transforming many aspects of our communities and our interactions, and there is little doubt that the jobs of the future will be digital.

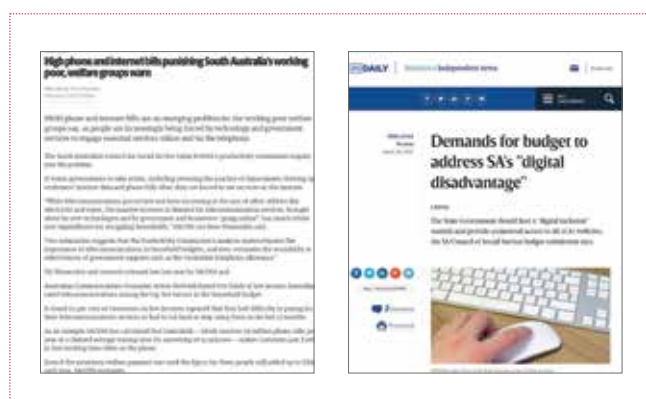
Yet this is threatened by a digital divide where some people are not connected to the digital world and may get left behind. This digital divide often reflects and compounds other areas of disadvantage based on income, education, age, disability and regional disadvantage.

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index measures this digital divide based on indicators of access to digital technologies, affordability and digital competence and literacy. While SACOSS' starting point (and area of expertise) is affordability, access and competency are also vital if people are to fully release the benefits of a digital future.

The bad news however is that South Australia lags behind all other mainland states in digital inclusion, and regional South Australia is more excluded than Adelaide so there is a lot of work to do to close the digital divide.

SACOSS' submission to the 2017-18 State Budget was built around digital inclusion both as an issue in its own right, and as a building block for jobs. While we suggested some discreet policies, such as providing un-metered (free) access to government websites, mostly our call was for the development of a whole of government strategy to improve our state's digital inclusion performance.

The lead author of the Australian Digital Inclusion Index, Professor Julian Thomas, spoke at the launch of our Budget Submission and SACOSS wrote to and/or met with representatives of all parties in the South Australian Parliament about our Budget Submission and our concerns around digital inclusion.



While our ideas were not taken up by the government in the State Budget, SACOSS has continued to develop policies to promote digital inclusion and the issue will be a flagship of the policy platform we take to the 2018 South Australian election. We hope that all parties will bring a suite of policies to the election aimed at promoting digital inclusion in this state.

SACOSS has also been active at the national level in relation to digital inclusion. Apart from launching our Connectivity Costs report, we gave evidence to the Productivity Commission Inquiry on the telecommunications Universal Service Obligation, and we attended meetings and supported the launch of the Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance – an alliance of community groups and corporations spearheaded by InfoExchange, Google, Australia Post and Telstra.

Employment

South Australia in recent years has had either the highest or second-highest rate of unemployment in the nation, as well as stubbornly high long-term unemployment and underemployment levels. Furthermore, many South Australians maintain only a tenuous grip on the workforce through insecure and casual employment.

Unemployment and insecure work can have a devastating impact on people's lives. Financial crisis, isolation, homelessness, poor physical and mental health and contact with the justice system are sadly all too common outcomes. In this context our community faces an ongoing challenge to create meaningful, secure and well paid employment and provide every person the opportunity, irrespective of their background, to develop the skills, knowledge and abilities to access this employment.

Throughout 2016/17 SACOSS continued to advocate for the state government to adopt initiatives to grow secure employment in SA, and target the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged jobs seekers, such as young and older people, Aboriginal people, people in regional communities and those from non- English speaking backgrounds.

SACOSS was again disappointed that the 2017-18 State Budget did not adopt any of the employment and training initiatives proposed by SACOSS in both its 2016-17 & 2017-18 Budget Submissions. While SACOSS was pleased that this year's Budget was focused on jobs and economic development, SACOSS noted in its State Budget Snapshot 2017-18 that a number of initiatives were again focused on attracting and supporting business and industry, without corresponding investment to ensure strategies are in place which specifically redress the imbalance in job opportunities between geographic regions, age cohorts and cultural backgrounds.

State Taxes

Because an adequate and sustainable tax base is vital to funding the health and community services that the community, and vulnerable and disadvantaged people in particular need, SACOSS was pleased in 2015-16 to receive government funding for two years to develop policies and build the understanding and capacity of the sector to respond to issues around state taxation. 2016-17 was the second and final year of that funding, and without it the tax debate would have been dominated (even more) by vested interests – or at a minimum, those whose focus is not vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

Most of our tax work in 2016-17 revolved around organising and analysing the results of a survey of 1000 South Australians we commissioned on various issues around state taxes and government expenditure, but over the two years of the project the outputs have included:

- > A ***Cost of Living Update*** on the impact of taxes on the household budget
- > The ***Losing the Jackpot*** report on gambling taxes in South Australia
- > Four Fact Sheets on gambling taxes in South Australia – including one specifically on the merits of the (then) proposed point-of-consumption wagering tax
- > Three reports based on a commissioned survey of 1000 South Australians:
 - ***Unfinished Business*** outlining the revenue problem and looking at public attitudes to various tax reform proposals
 - ***Reality Check*** looking at public attitudes to government expenditure and challenging perceptions of waste
 - ***No Option*** looking at broader public attitudes to state taxes and the challenges and possibilities for tax reform
- > Two Fact Sheets based on the tax survey reports
- > Two ***State Budget Submissions*** incorporating tax reform proposals, and two Budget Snapshots containing substantive commentaries on the tax aspects of the state budget
- > Four opinion pieces on tax issues published in ***The Advertiser*** and ***InDaily***
- > Two ***SACOSS News*** articles and two ***SACOSS Annual Report*** articles to keep our sector informed about tax issues of concern
- > Other media, social media and public commentary associated with the above reports and other tax proposals

The most important outcome of this work was probably the adoption by the State Government and the smooth passage through Parliament of the point-of-consumption wagering tax. This tax reform closes access for corporate bookies to virtual gambling tax havens, is fairer for local bookmakers and businesses, and will benefit the state budget by around \$10m a year over the forward estimates. And as a bonus, some of the corporate bookies say they are now not offering South Australian clients some gambling incentives. Since the gambling industry likes to talk about winning – we call that a win (arguably even a quadrella!).

SACOSS has also continued to have input into national debates via the COSS network and by feeding into ACOSS tax policy – and of course those debates continue.

While the SACOSS work on tax issues in the last two years has been significant and productive, the revenue challenges remain for the state government and our sector continues to need to engage in this area. The 2018 SA State Election is fast approaching and there is always a temptation for parties and candidates to offer tax cuts without a consideration or announcement of the consequences of those cuts on funding vital services. Our message – that without taxation vital services disappear – has not changed, but the work done throughout 2016-17 puts us in a much better position to argue the detail of what a fair and adequate state tax system would look like.

TAX MEDIA



Greg Ogle: South Australian needs a gaming tax to stop online bookmakers channelling profits through offshore tax havens

Greg Ogle, The Advertiser
September 11, 2016 5:21pm

WITH the AFL footy finals well under way, we are hoping that this will be the last final series where online bookmakers can take bets from South Australian punters and channel them through virtual gambling tax havens, thus avoiding paying gambling taxes in this state.



Welfare lobby SACOSS says South Australia needs a proper talk about raising revenue



New gambling tax to target all SA agencies

DANIEL WILLIS
STATE POLITICAL EDITOR

GAMBLING agencies that allow South Australians to bet on sports, elections and horses will be all hit with a new tax expected to deliver \$9.2 million per year to the State Budget. Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis yesterday announced the move, which he said would be a national first and unlock \$500,000 a year to boost gambling rehabilitation programs. The move will apply a 15 per cent tax on the net wagering revenue of betting companies

that earn more than \$150,000 per year and offer services to SA. It comes into force from July 1, 2017. It means all bets placed in SA with Australian-based betting companies will be liable. Mr Koutsantonis said the move followed calls from the SA Council of Social Services for gambling tax reform and the implementation of a place of consumption charge on companies. The tax will apply to bets on horse, harness and greyhound racing, and sports such as AFL, cricket and soccer.

It will also apply to other bets, such as elections and the Academy Awards. The Government expects to raise \$9.2 million each year. Of that, \$500,000 will be contributed annually to the state's gamblers rehabilitation fund. The Government says the racing industry will be "no worse off" due to the tax. Mr Koutsantonis said interstate-based agencies needed to be licensed to offer bets in SA. "We believe that we have the constitutional authority and the legal authority to do this," he said.

Independent Senator Nick Xenophon called for more money to be put into gambling rehabilitation, but said Mr Koutsantonis deserved a "pat on the back". "I've been on for a long time about getting multinationals to pay their fair share of tax in Australia, and this kind of tax that targets activity at the source may be a way to do it," Senator Xenophon said. A Thoroughbred Racing SA spokesman said they were encouraged by assurances that the racing industry would be no worse off.

Utilities

SACOSS has a program of work related to utilities including energy, water and telecommunications. The focus is on preventing financial hardship, achieving affordability, facilitating social and financial health and wellbeing, and supporting government and businesses in dealing with their customers and communities.

ENERGY AND WATER

WORLD'S LARGEST BATTERY

SACOSS was delighted with the news that the world's largest battery will be built in South Australia. In February, SACOSS had called on the South Australian Government to initiate a host of reforms to improve system security in South Australia. SACOSS called for:



- > Immediate investment in a 200 Mega Watt utility-scale battery storage facility combined with renewable generation;
- > Recognition that gas is an essential transitional fuel;
- > Imposing technical requirements on wind farms to deal with the related frequency issues;
- > Urgently finalising the Australian Energy Market's (AEMC's) protected contingency events Rule Change.

In March, the Government announced its State Energy Plan which included provision for a 100MW battery storage facility.

EMBEDDED NETWORKS

Building on our 2015/16 research into the experience of residents in caravan and residential parks, SACOSS has continued to advocate for improved consumer protections for vulnerable consumers in embedded networks like these. We convened a group of consumer advocates across Australia to consider the best way to achieve improved consumer protections, and provided advice to the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) and the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) as part of their respective reviews into regulatory arrangements for embedded networks and dispute resolution for embedded network customers.



SACOSS will continue in 2017/18 to advocate for the implementation of improved consumer protections, particularly access to appropriate low cost dispute resolution for embedded network customers, and strengthened regulation to ensure that embedded networks are complying with their obligations, and that all customers are receiving safe, high quality and fair-priced electricity supply.

SYSTEM SECURITY WORK

South Australia's energy market is in an accelerated transition. Addressing energy and system security in SA is an extremely challenging task and many levers will need to be pulled in order to comprehensively address the issues. There is no silver bullet that will fix the problems overnight, and the technology that we need is still very much under development.



With all of this challenge, there comes tremendous opportunity. South Australia is positioned globally to be a flagship for technologies and power system arrangements which will lead the way in a low carbon future. SACOSS has been playing a lead role in developments in system security in South Australia, including as a member of the Australian Energy Market Commission's System Security Technical Working Group. SACOSS played a lead role in ensuring tight controls around the introduction of relatively untested technology (fast frequency response), including close monitoring by the market operator. This will result in the technology being developed in a way that contributes to system security, and smooths the way for global uptake of this technology, which is crucial in the move to zero carbon.

CONCESSIONS

SACOSS continues to call for changes to the current concession arrangement. A move to a percentage-based energy concession provides the opportunity to address the current inefficiencies in the administration of the concession in South Australia: the current design is administratively burdensome and contributes to many households not getting their entitlements and this is further exacerbated as these consumers participate in the energy market seeking lower prices (i.e. concession portability).



SACOSS supports the retailer administration of the concession and believes that significant efficiencies experienced would be achieved through retailer administration as per other governments in the National Energy Market. SACOSS also believes that the issue with portability is the verification with Centrelink. Retailer communication with the customer at the point of transfer is anticipated to significantly address the portability issue.

SACOSS does not support the concept of a bundled concession. A number of issues exist with the bundled concession concept, including that it blurs the line between state and federal responsibility in regards to income support and it increases the state's exposure for being responsible for other price increases not directly related to their jurisdictional responsibilities.

SACOSS has continued to advocate for the above concession reform throughout 2016/17.

PRESENTATION AT GRATTAN INSTITUTE ENERGY EVENT

The Grattan Institute hosted an event during October focused on the statewide blackout which occurred in South Australia on September 28. Jo De Silva, SACOSS Senior Policy Officer, joined a panel of experts at this event. The event considered the range of solutions to the system security issues in South Australia.



SACOSS proposed that a range of measures be considered, including technical requirements on wind generators and the creation of a category of events called protected contingency events which would give the market operator more flexibility during a frequency event. The role of batteries was also considered and SACOSS argued that the technology is rapidly developing and will soon emerge as a game-changer in the sector.



\$45 a year drop in bills causes ripples

MILES KEMP

WATER bills will drop by about \$45 a year after a ruling by the independent umpire but the cut is still only half what it should be, welfare groups say.

However, consumers have until March 24 to challenge the ruling by the Essential Services Commission of South Australia, which yesterday shaved \$60 million from SA Water's allowable revenue for the next four years.

The monopoly government company confirmed this would result in an average annual household bill cut of about \$45, down from \$1343 from July 1.

But the cut is less than half that recommended by an Adelaide University study, which The Advertiser revealed in Oc-

tober last year. SA Water's customers will pay \$160 million less over the coming four years compared to now, which equates to around 3 per cent per annum average reduction in revenue, he said.

The cut is similar to the revenue decrease forced on SA Water for the previous four years and ESCOSA estimates the average annual saving would be about \$45.

SACOSS director Ross Womenley "cautiously" welcomed the bill cut but was still critical of ESCOSA decision making.

Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis said the draft decision showed the involvement of ESCOSA in setting revenue every four years was working.

But Dr Walsh diverted during his media conference yesterday to highlight a State Government decision looking in higher prices for consumers.

SA Water is allowed to recoup revenue in line with the value put on its assets by the State Government, which welfare groups have argued is too high.

Dr Walsh said the Government had set the value of SA Water's assets to make sure prices did not change too much when ESCOSA took over the power to set revenue in 2013.

Public submissions to the ESCOSA draft determination

Heat on prices as \$144 gas cut flows

DAVID NANKERVIS

ENERGY giant AGL is the first major retailer to commit to passing on annual household savings of \$144 to their customers after the national energy regulator decided to cut supply charges.

In a letter sent to Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis, AGL chief executive Andy Vesey confirmed the company would pass on the full reduction.

"I understand this is an important issue for South Australian energy consumers and appreciate your request for assurance on behalf of the

good for electricity bills, however, because SA Power Networks has proposed a \$1 increase for the typical household. The cut to gas supply charges is welcome news after a series of price rises for gas consumption — including a 14 per cent surge in 2014.

The cut to gas supply charges will be enjoyed by 435,000 of the state's gas-connected households, while savings of \$750 will flow through to small business owners. The AER's decision to reduce gas supply charges applies to each of the next five financial years, beginning

the reduction in network charges "will take the pressure off household and small business gas bills."

CEO Andrew Stanford said the price drop "will significantly improve the affordability of natural gas and will be a boon for South Australia." This week, SA Power Networks made a pricing proposal to the AER for network charges to apply next financial year. While the state's monopoly electricity supply company is proposing an \$18 average cut to network costs for businesses, it is applying to the regulator for a \$1 increase in



Ouch! Zapped by price

AGL and Origin electricity charges to increase in July

EXCLUSIVE

DAVID NANKERVIS

ENERGY retailer Origin will increase electricity bills by 6.5 per cent or \$117 a year.

The decision comes on top of AGL's announcement yesterday of a 12 per cent — or \$228 a year — increase for electricity as welfare agencies warned more retailers were likely to hike their prices.

Energy Australia refused to rule out price rises when contacted by The Advertiser yesterday.

But AGL gas customers will receive good news today when the retailer announces an average \$100 a year cut to gas bills.

The price rises from the

with households having just seen savings in network charges of around \$40 a year, Mr Womenley said.

Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis himself as AGL customer, also urged customers to shop around and potentially save hundreds of dollars on their electricity bills.

He said the unjustified price rise "is a dramatic increase for South Australian families."

AGL said the price rise was "mainly driven by the cost and availability of coal and gas supply for electricity generation as well as the changing mix of generation output."

The closure of Port Augusta power station was considered a "cost-of-living summa".

Mr Koutsantonis said the state Liberals "do not to explore greater interconnection with eastern states when they privatised our power assets in 1999 and we are seeing the fruits of that decision today."

Mr Henley called for a stakeholder energy summit to discuss how to reach the Government's renewable energy targets at the cheapest cost.

AGL, which forecasts a \$720 million profit this financial year, said it supported "a summit to discuss challenges facing the SA energy market", while Mr Koutsantonis said he would consider a "cost-of-living summa".

Power price hikes to lead to more disconnections across South Australia, SACOSS says

DAVID NANKERVIS

South Australia's social welfare sector has called for an independent investigation into electricity disconnections as winter and power price hikes begin to bite.

Statistics from the Australian Energy Regulator show SA already had the highest proportion of disconnections in the nation.

From January to March, more than 5.36 per cent of every 100 customers or more than 2,820 South Australian residential customers were disconnected.

The state also has the highest proportion of customers on hardship programs.

South Australian Council of Social Services (SACOSS) executive director Ross Womenley said there was no doubt some households were finding it tough.

"We have the highest electricity prices in the nation in South Australia. We have the highest unemployment in South Australia and that's no coincidence," he said.

Smart meters will lead to more disconnections in SA, social advocates warn

DAVID NANKERVIS

Smart meters will lead to more electricity disconnections in South Australia if they are rolled out without consumer protection, social advocates have warned.

Smart meters, which the SA Government says will allow digital meters, can record electricity use every 30 minutes, with the data sent back to retailers just as regularly.

They are already available in South Australia but from December 2017, all installed and replaced electricity meters will be smart meters.

SA Unions for Peace policy and research manager Gavin Duffy said the automation of the system



SA Power Network's bid to collect more cash denied by Australian Competition Tribunal

DAVID NANKERVIS

The Australian Competition Tribunal has found the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) did not make any error in denying an application by SA Power Networks (SPN) to collect more revenue.

SPN's application against last year's decision by the regulator and that sought to earn an extra \$220 million in revenue, which opponents feared would lead to a rise in retail power prices.

The company is the sole owner of the state's power distribution network of poles and wires.

AER made a decision on the SPN's revenue application for 2015-2020, providing a total revenue allowance of \$1.64 billion compared to the \$4.91 billion sought by SPN.

The South Australian Government, industry and welfare groups had also opposed any move which would have increased retail power prices.



ENERGY, WATER AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS EVENTS ORGANISED BY SACOSS

Consumer Protection Frameworks Forum: Rights and Responsibilities – 12 August 2016

CONSUMER PROTECTION FRAMEWORKS: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

FRIDAY 12TH AUGUST 2016

In August 2016, SACOSS hosted a forum on Consumer Protection Frameworks: Rights and Responsibilities. The forum, with a mixture of panel presentations and group discussion, explored the evolution of consumer protection frameworks in the National Energy Market. It covered the key strategic policy issues underlying these frameworks, specifically:

- > Who has responsibility for facilitating access to an essential service?
- > What are the expectations of energy businesses as providers of an essential service?
- > What rights need to be guaranteed to the consumer in any transformation of the consumer protection framework?



SACOSS VULNERABILITY & AFFORDABILITY CONFERENCE 2016

ENERGY, WATER AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS



The SACOSS Vulnerability & Affordability Conference 2016: Energy, Water & Telecommunications was held in November against the backdrop of the iconic Adelaide Oval, and proved to be another successful and engaging major conference event.

Coming at a time of significant regulatory and policy reforms designed to assist vulnerable customers, the conference provided opportunities for open dialogue between leaders from the energy, water and telecommunications industries, and 120 delegates representing industry, government, and the community services sector.

Throughout the day delegates enjoyed multiple plenary sessions including speakers from Yarra Valley Water, the University of South Australia, Kildonan UnitingCare, SA Water, Telstra, EnergyAustralia, St Vincent de Paul Society,

Essential Services Commission of South Australia, the Australian Energy Regulator and SACOSS.

It was evident from the sessions that much has been achieved by industry, government and community stakeholders in recent years. However, the fact that we are yet to achieve important reforms like the introduction of a percentage-based energy concession and improved targeting of energy efficiency schemes indicates that there is still some way to go to provide adequately for vulnerable customers.

SACOSS delivered the 2016 conference with support of the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, Energy Australia and SA Power Networks as our Major Sponsors, and AGL as our event partner for the conference.

National Consumer Roundtable on Energy

The National Consumer Roundtable on Energy (the Roundtable) is an informal coalition of national energy consumer advocates primarily focused on policy dialogue and strategic collaboration. The Roundtable considers that the supply of electricity should be regarded as an essential service, on par with water supply and emergency services. Under a grant from Energy Consumers Australia, SACOSS convened and coordinated three face-to-face meetings of the Roundtable in 2016/17:

- > Brisbane 7 – 8 November 2016
- > Hobart 16 – 17 February 2017

> Adelaide 22 – 23 June 2017

These meetings provided consumer advocates with the opportunity to consider, collaborate and strategize about contemporary energy policy in the National Energy Market. Outside face-to-face meetings, consumer advocates continued the conversation via NEMchat, an online forum moderated by SACOSS.

Planning is well underway for the next series of meetings of the Roundtable in 2017/18.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Connectivity Costs: Telecommunications Affordability for Low Income Australians

At our AGM in November 2016 SACOSS launched a major research report, *Connectivity Costs*, on the cost of telecommunications for low income Australians. The research was funded by the Australian Communications Consumers Action Network (ACCAN) and was based on a survey of over 500 low income households and a series of focus groups.

The study found that telecommunications affordability was a key issue for people on low incomes. In particular, the survey (which was conducted by Mint Research) found that:

- > 62% of low income consumers reported experiencing either difficulty paying, having to cut back, or having to stop using one or more telecommunications services for financial reasons in the last 12 months;
- > those on Newstart, Youth Allowance and Parenting Payment were most likely to be struggling with affordability of telecommunications, while those on the Age Pension had the fewest problems; and
- > telecommunications affordability problems were greater for low income families with dependent children than those without children.

Given the essential nature of telecommunications, and the financial stress that telecommunication costs are placing on low income households, there is a clear role for government in assisting people to maintain access to this essential service. The report made a number of recommendations for upgrading the Centrelink Telephone Allowance to have a broader scope, wider eligibility, higher rates and more regular payments, but the survey data also clearly showed the inadequacy of base level of income support payments like Newstart and Youth Allowance for ensuring access to essential services like telecommunications. As such the report also recommended that these allowances need to be increased immediately.

The *Connectivity Costs* report also highlighted a range of market products and practices which were barriers to affordability. These included:

- > lack of mobile data on affordable plans
- > lock-in contracts
- > disadvantageous payment methods and billing cycles forced on consumers (eg. direct debiting on a 28-day cycle), and
- > a lack of transparency around costs.



The report concluded that unless both the Centrelink Telephone Allowance and these market barriers to affordability are addressed, we will continue to see a digital divide where low income consumers are missing out on telecommunications services, and subsequently, on life opportunities – at a cost to both them and the wider society.

In addition to the *Connectivity Costs* report, SACOSS made a submission and gave evidence to the Productivity Commission inquiry into the telecommunications Universal Service Obligation. The “obligation” (paid for by government) is on Telstra to ensure basic access to phones, but is outdated and does not deal with the range of digital technologies which are increasingly essential. SACOSS welcomed the Productivity Commission’s recognition of the need to expand the service obligation to data services, but was critical that the Commission had largely ignored the affordability challenges for those on low incomes.

Over the course of the year, SACOSS also developed the telecommunications work into a broader concern around digital inclusion and incorporated this into our 2017-18 State Budget submission and subsequent advocacy.

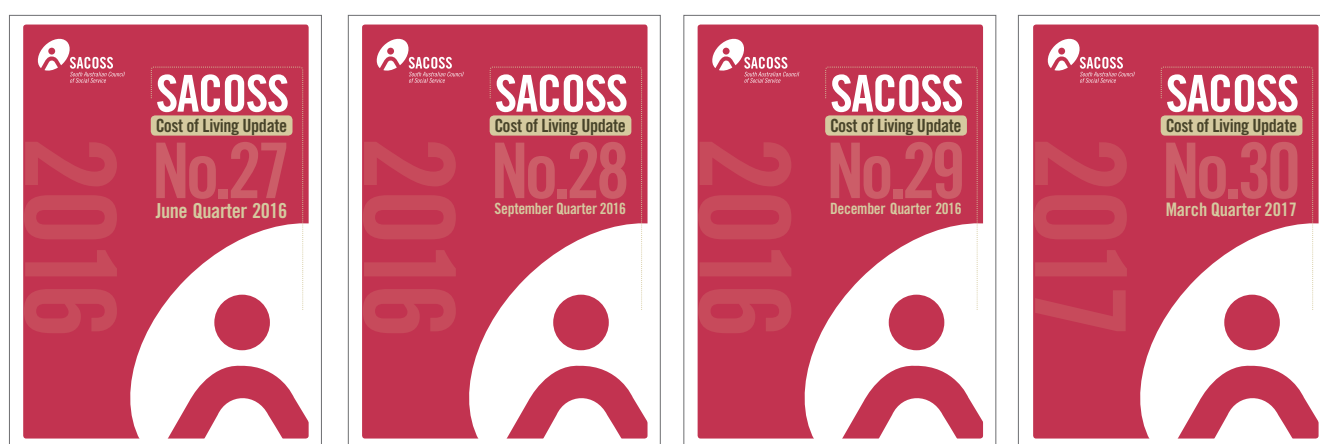
Cost of Living

SACOSS remained concerned and continued to advocate around cost of living issues throughout the 2016-17 year.

As the table here shows, electricity prices again jumped markedly this year – but so too did fruit and vegetable prices, while health prices also continued their long term above-the-inflation-rate climb.

While these price rises impact on all households, they impact particularly on those on the lowest incomes who spend a greater proportion of their income on such essentials and who have less room to move in their weekly budget.

Cost of Living Area	Adelaide CPI % June 2016 - June 2017
Food	1.9
Fruit and Vegetables	9.6
Housing	1.4
Rent	0.6
Utilities	3.3
Electricity	14.3
Water	-6.3
Gas	-9.9
Health	4.4
Transport	2.0
CPI All Groups	1.6



COST OF LIVING UPDATES

Throughout the year, SACOSS published a *Cost of Living Update* each quarter, based as always on the ABS CPI and Selected Living Cost Index data. The reports also had particular focuses on:

- > **Financial pressures (June Quarter 2016).** This was based on the data from our telecommunications research on the importance of key expenditures on household budgets and showed the sorts of sacrifices made by low income households to make ends meet.
- > **Cost of Living Changes since the State Labor Government was elected in 2001 (December Quarter 2016).** This was partly developed in response to media inquiries, but had some interesting twists – including that while energy price increases in South Australia were huge and causing hardship, they were about the same as other states in the national energy market, and that despite all the hype, living standards for households on the

average wage had increased, as real wages had increased more than the cost of living. However, for those on income support or with a less secure connection to paid employment (eg casual workers) the situation was harder.

- > **Energy prices (March Quarter 2017)** which put the increases in petrol prices in that quarter into perspective over the last ten years. Petrol prices are very volatile, but when viewed over the long term it is clear that electricity and gas price rises are a much bigger problem.

The SACOSS *Cost of Living Updates* were based on ABS data – which is itself was getting stale because much of the base-level data is built on the 2009-10 *Household Expenditure Survey*. The 2015-16 HES was released in the second half of 2017 and will provide a wealth of new data to analyse what is happening – particularly for the lowest income households in our community.

CHILD AND FAMILY WELLBEING

It is widely accepted that the quality of a child's environment and relationships is fundamentally important in nurturing their healthy development. However despite recognition of this, and Government initiatives in the area, there has been a crisis building in child protection services. Unfortunately, this is not unique to South Australia.

A number of high profile tragic failures of the child protection services led to the state government establishing the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission to investigate the adequacy of the child protection system in the state. The Royal Commission's final report, *A life they Deserve* had 260 recommendations and was handed to the Governor on 5 August 2016.

The scope of the Royal Commission focused on identifying issues with our current system and so unfortunately did not explore how the wellbeing of children could be enhanced within families and communities, preventing abuse and neglect, and therefore requiring fewer children and young people to ever need the intervention of tertiary child protection services.

The state government responded quickly to Commissioner Nyland's report, committing to the majority of the recommendations. One important part of the early work has been to reform the state's legislation, and a suite of new legislation was introduced to Parliament to replace the Children's Protection Act 1993.

SACOSS was active in lobbying the government regarding the new legislation and joined with other stakeholders in an alliance on issues of mutual concern. SACOSS and partners made joint submissions, and wrote to and met with Parliamentarians seeking amendments to the Bills. The most active members of the alliance were the Law Society, Australian Medical Association SA, Council for the Care of Children, Child and Family Welfare Association, Youth Affairs Council of SA, and the Child Protection Reform Movement. SACOSS also consulted with Connecting Foster Carers and the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement.

SACOSS and others had major reservations regarding the final draft Bill tabled, which later became the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*. The joint advocacy was not successful on all counts but some significant amendments were achieved including the insertion of specific Ministerial roles, functions and reporting, and the expansion of the decisions reviewable by the SA Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) under the Act. Our work also closed a loophole in the Bill where the Department of Child Protection could place children "temporarily" in situations that did not meet the Placement Principles with no specific timeframe for review.

An area of particular contention was the primacy of safety in assessments and decisions about children and young people which deviates from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the approach taken in most other states. SACOSS and partners argued that assessments should be made using a 'best-interests' framework, where safety is important but considered alongside other needs.



Despite our efforts we were not able to have this amended in the Bill.

A significant gap in the legislation is the lack of provisions or a strategic focus on the prevention of child abuse or neglect, as well as a lack of targeted intervention, when risk is identified but before harm has occurred. There was also a lack of provisions aimed at reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in need of tertiary child protective services.

The *Report on Government Services Child Protection Overview* (2016) showed a reduction in funding of intensive family support after 2014 and a corresponding increase in costly out of home services, which is deeply concerning.

The piloting of the Child and Family Assessment and Referral Networks (CFARNs) is one noteworthy new government initiative aimed at providing a response to children and families that do not meet the threshold for tertiary intervention. However, while mentioned in the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, the CFARNs are established at the discretion of the government with little further detail.

Perhaps the most exciting outcome of SACOSS' work was the acknowledgment from the government in Parliament that there is no legislative base for prevention and early intervention work in the area of child and family wellbeing, and a commitment to drafting a new Bill with this objective.

SA'S FIRST COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In March 2017 the Government announced the new role of SA Commissioner for Children and Young People. SACOSS, together with other key child advocates, had for many years lobbied for the creation of this position, and we applaud the Government on this important initiative. We also congratulate Helen Connolly, who at the same time was announced the inaugural Commissioner for Children and Young People.

We are hopeful that the *Children and Young People (Wellbeing, Development and Early Intervention) Bill 2017* can provide a strong base for family and community strengthening and a significant flow-on to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. SACOSS will continue to advocate that the Bill should attempt to address the social issues that arise in our families and communities that lead to a context where abuse and neglect arise. We hope that addressing issues early will allow more children to grow up healthy and happy within nurturing families.

CHILD AND FAMILY WELLBEING MEDIA



The Government's new child abuse protection Bill has been criticised by lawyers, who say it ignores the Nyland Royal Commission's findings

Lucy Bould, Political Reporter, The Advertiser
February 16, 2017 8:38pm
Subscriber only

- Royal Commission reveals Port Pirie among worst for child abuse rates
- Another Families SA abuse scandal, another review of system
- Female genital mutilation ban left out of child protection laws

At-risk youth support a future win-win

ROSS WOMERSLEY

ANYONE who's lived with a teenager will know that most of them are disengaged in life with simply being thrown out of the family home the day they turn 18.

However, under current arrangements, our obligation to support young people who are in out-of-home care or under the Guardianship of the Minister ends on their 18th birthday. Experience shows that this puts them at great risk of ending up homeless, socially isolated, unemployed and entangled with the criminal justice system.

Almost all of their caregivers typically have access to personal and family support and resources well into their 20s, certainly during post-school education and their first experiences looking for a job and navigating housing independence.

But the state, as the effective parent, does not provide this important supportive environment for young people who have been removed from biological families due to child safety concerns.

In our recent State Budget Submission, SACOSS has called for \$1.5 million per

Australia, are behind international comparisons in the UK, Canada, New Zealand and some states of the US in their transition planning and post-care support.

In SA from 2003-2014, a total of 205 young people left care between the ages of 17 and 19 years.

So, we are not talking about significant numbers of young people needing care support.

Until now the case for extending out-of-home care has been that vulnerable young people shouldn't have to go it alone and that the state as their guardian has a responsibility that doesn't stop at 18.

However, we also now know there is a good financial

model by Anglican Victoria found a significant economic case for bringing our support to line with international competitors - with substantial savings in government spending on housing, drug and alcohol costs, and in the health and criminal justice areas.

That report estimates that for every \$1 invested there is \$1.6 in economic benefit to the community, including savings for government services.

Legislative change and financial investment is needed to extend support until a young person reaches at least 21. It's a win-win.

As a community it costs us less money over the long-term, and importantly, we en-



CLIMATE CHANGE

SACOSS was a member of the Project Control Group and Vulnerabilities Sub-Committee for the Strengthening Disaster Resilience for People with Vulnerabilities Department of Communities and Social Inclusion Project. The Project aimed to develop a framework to strengthen resilience of people at greater risk in the event of an emergency.

The 'South Australian framework to strengthen resilience of people at greater risk in the event of an emergency' will form part of the State Emergency Management Plan. It will provide guidance for state and local government, business, non-government organisations, volunteers, communities and individuals across South Australia on strategies to assist people with vulnerabilities and those supporting them, to prepare for and manage their safety and wellbeing in emergencies.

The framework will support consideration of ways to enhance the capacities of people at greater risk in the event of an emergency. When completed, it will represent a commitment by state agencies to integrate the needs of persons at greater risk into relevant state government policy development, service planning and delivery.

The Summer 2016-17 issue of SACOSS News had climate change as its main focus.

SACOSS also played an active role in the Review by Dr Alan Finkel into system security, affordability and low emissions. SACOSS was pleased that the Review did not recommend integrating low emissions into the National Electricity Objective, a move which SACOSS argued would have led to higher prices.

Dr Finkel proposed 50 recommendations in total. Of these, 24 relate to work which is already progressing. A further nine are new recommendations but it is our view that roll-out of these should be subject to the developments already underway due to their cost implications. The remaining 17 recommendations are decisions that needed to be made by governments and include the big ticket initiatives related to a new governance model and generator retirements. The key thing to notice about all of these recommendations is that affordability is not prioritised. The only significant affordability initiative is adoption of the Clean Energy Target as opposed to a business as usual approach.

It is for this reason that SACOSS does not support the roll-out of all of the recommendations at once. It is necessary to have a managed rollout of initiatives, so that time is given to development of priority initiatives and their impact is assessed prior to adoption of lower order priorities.





SUBMISSIONS

One of SACOSS' core roles is to provide input to government and other policy makers on issues that affect our sector or impact on vulnerable and disadvantaged people. This advice is often provided by making submissions in response to public consultations run by government or statutory authorities, but SACOSS also initiates submissions on issues of deep concern to our members and people experiencing hardship. SACOSS submissions range from broad statements of principle to detailed and technical policy advice, and are often used as platforms for further advocacy.

June 2017

- > Submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee on the Statewide Electricity Blackout and Subsequent Power Outages
- > Submission to the Essential Services Commission on the Draft Report for the Inquiry into the Licensing Arrangements for Generators in South Australia

May 2017

- > Submission to the Department of State Development on the Energy Security Target
- > Submission to the Australian Energy Market Commission Review of regulatory arrangements for embedded networks
- > Submission to the Australian Energy Market Commission in response to the Five Minute Settlement Direction Paper
- > Submission to Department of the Environment and Energy in response to the Climate Change Policies Review 2017 Discussion Paper
- > Joint Submission to the Climate Change Authority Power System Security, Electricity Prices and Emission Reductions
- > Linking Services for Mental Health and Wellbeing: Submission to the SA Mental Health Strategic Plan 2017-2022
- > Response to Future Directions of the Financial Wellbeing and Capability Activity Discussion Paper

April 2017

- > Submission to the Australian Energy Market Commission's System Security Market Frameworks Review
- > Submission: Robo-Debt Inquiry

March 2017

- > Submission to the Independent Review into the Future Security of the National Electricity Market

February 2017

- > Submission to Essential Services Commission of South Australia Inquiry into Regulatory Arrangements for Small-scale Water, Sewerage and Energy Services
- > Submission: Draft Rule Determination - National Electricity Amendment (Emergency Frequency Control Schemes) Rule 2017

January 2017

- > Submission: Productivity Commission Draft Report on Telecommunications Universal Service Obligation
- > Submission on draft Children and Young People (Safety) Bill 2016

October 2016

- > Joint COSS Submission: ACNC 2017 Annual Information Statement

September 2016

- > Submission to Essential Services Commission of South Australia Inquiry into Regulatory Arrangements for Small-scale Water, Sewerage and Energy Services

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION TO THE SECTOR

SACOSS NEWS

EBULLETIN

MEMBER ADVISORIES

POST-BUDGET
BREAKFAST

SACOSS NEWS

Each edition of SACOSS' magazine SACOSS News focuses on a social justice theme which allows us to share perspectives, ideas and analyses from a broad range of contributors.

Spring 2016
Health Edition

Summer 2016
Climate Change Edition

Autumn 2017
Disability and the NDIS Edition



SACOSS eBulletin



EBULLETIN

SACOSS issues a fortnightly eBulletin listing upcoming events, job vacancies, and other items relevant to the community services sector. The SACOSS eBulletin is emailed directly to subscribers every fortnight and is currently distributed to 1096 email addresses. All SACOSS Members receive a copy of the eBulletin.



Member Advisory

MEMBER ADVISORIES

SACOSS sends out regular Member Advisories as a way to keep Members up to date with current policy and sector issues, or to provide information about upcoming events and opportunities for involvement in SACOSS work.

POST-BUDGET BREAKFASTS

This year in addition to our annual Post-Budget Breakfast with the Treasurer, SACOSS also held a Post-Budget Breakfast with the Opposition Leader.

We thank Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis for sharing with SACOSS members his summary of the areas of the State Budget crucial for the community and social services sector, and for vulnerable and disadvantaged

South Australians. We also thank Opposition Leader Steven Marshall for outlining his alternative budget vision.

Our esteemed speakers attracted significant interest from SACOSS members, with both Budget Breakfasts well attended. We thank everyone involved, and particularly sponsors Nexia Edwards Marshall, Community Business Bureau (CBB) and Statewide Super.



INFORMATION DISSEMINATION TO THE COMMUNITY

MEDIA

SOCIAL MEDIA

SACOSS RADIO

FACT SHEETS

MEDIA

SACOSS is recognised as a respected authority and advocate across the South Australian media, and CEO Ross Womersley is in constant demand by journalists from radio and TV, newspapers and online media. We're asked for comment on a range of issues, including energy prices and other cost of living concerns, child wellbeing, unemployment, tax and digital exclusion to name just a few.

SACOSS' media presence grew in 2016-17 and we continue to build our reputation as a strong, trustworthy and intelligent voice for the sector and for people living with poverty and disadvantage in our state.

SACOSS MEDIA

At-risk youth support a future win-win



ROSS WOMERSLEY

ANYONE who's lived with a teenage will know that most of them are ill-equipped to cope with simply being thrown out of the family home the day they turn 18.

However, under current arrangements, our obligation to support young people who are in out-of-home care or under the Guardianship of the Minister, ends on their 18th birthday. Experience shows that these young people are at great risk of ending up homeless, socially isolated and in poor physical and mental health, including from substance abuse.

It also increases the risks of early pregnancy and parent hood, poor educational outcomes, unemployment and engagement with the criminal justice system.

Almost all of these young people have access to parental and family support and resources well into their 20s, certainly during post-school education and their first experiences looking for a job and navigating housing, independence.

But the state, in the effective period, does not provide the important support and resources for young people who have been removed from biological families due to inadequate parenting.

In our recent State Budget Submission, SACOSS facilitated for \$15 million per annum to provide extended support services to young people in out-of-home care until at least age 25.

We know that all Australian jurisdictions, including South

Australia, are behind international comparisons in the UK, Canada, New Zealand and some states of the US in their transition planning and post-care support.

In SA from 2013-2014, a total of 205 young people left care between the ages of 16 and 20 years.

So, we are not talking about significant numbers of young people needing our support.

Until now the case for extending out of home care was that vulnerable young people shouldn't have to go it alone and that the state as their guardian, has a responsibility that doesn't stop at 18.

However, we also know there is a good financial case for the state to invest in this support. Governments can save money by investing in young people during this transitional stage.

Recent research completed by Anglicare Victoria found a significant economic case for bringing our support in line with international counterparts with substantial savings in government spending on housing, drug and alcohol costs, and in the health and criminal justice areas.

That report estimates that for every \$1 invested there is \$1.66 in economic benefit to the community, including savings to government services.

Legislative change and financial investment is needed to extend support until a young person reaches at least 25. It's a win-win.

As a community it only makes sense over the long-term, and importantly, we ensure some of our most vulnerable young people get the support they need to get a really good start in life.

ROSS WOMERSLEY IS CEO, EXECUTIVE OF SACOSS



Tom Koutsantonis SA Budget Highlights

Opinion

Ross Womersley: SACOSS believes there are hits and misses in South Australia State Budget 2017



If not a bank levy, then what?

OPINION

Opponents of the State Government's major bank levy need to explain how they would fill South Australia's revenue shortfall, argues Ross Womersley.



The state Budget isn't a big-spending document, argues SACOSS. Photo: Andy Castellucci/Daily

The big banks are lobbying against the State Government's major bank levy, three crossbenchers (the Australian Conservatives, and John Darley) say they'll oppose it, and the State Liberals are considering their position. But it is vital that all South Australians understand what is at stake.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter and Facebook are important platforms by which SACOSS engages with a range of supporters and audiences: from politicians and journalists, to community leaders and sector employees, as well as grassroots organisations and people experiencing poverty and disadvantage first-hand.

Through use of social media we place ourselves in the centre of public and political debates, and can quickly share our work and our views on a range of issues. Our social media profile, together with friends and follower numbers, continued to grow throughout 2016/17.

TWITTER



SACOSS engages with our supporters via Twitter several times a day. Since joining Twitter in 2009, we have posted more than 22,200 tweets in total, which equates to an average of 7.5 tweets per day.

Our Twitter account has over 2800 followers and gives us direct communications access to important decision makers, commentators and thinkers, as well as the general public. It is also a great way to share our reports and fact sheets, videos and podcasts, as well as links to our TV and radio interviews. All Councils of Social Service across Australia are on Twitter, which allows us to stand together on issues as well as to amplify each other's voices.

FACEBOOK



SACOSS engages with the wider community through our Facebook page. The page has 1600 likes, and while we do connect with other organisations in the sector, the majority of our Facebook interaction is with personal Facebook users. This platform gives us the ability to share information in more detail, to publicly express our standpoint on particular issues, and to help advertise SACOSS and member events including seminars, forums, courses and conferences.

SACOSS RADIO

Tuesdays 6pm on

RADIO 101.5 ADELAIDE RICH & REAL

SMALL CHANGE

Justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians

Small Change is SACOSS' weekly radio program broadcast on Radio Adelaide. The station celebrated its 45th birthday this year, and over the last 12 months has faced the challenge of transitioning to an entity independent of the University of Adelaide, and settling into a new home at 3 Cinema Place.

This new era for Radio Adelaide reminds us of the all too common struggle faced by not for profit and community organisations to survive on uncertain funding whilst continuing to meet the unwavering and often urgent needs of the communities they serve.

Each week Small Change provides us with a platform to promote and profile the work of our members and wider community, and the stories we present remind us of the resilience of our sector and the inspiring work that often goes unnoticed. We regard those working in the sector, those accessing services and those with lived experience as the experts, and turn to them for analysis on the issues, ideas and questions facing our community.

Over the last year we've: shared stories of poverty and hardship; spoken to academics, policy makers and community workers; and looked abroad and heard how communities in other countries address the issues of homelessness, human rights and social justice. We've profiled issues of elder abuse, child protection, welfare, disability, Indigenous rights, tax and cost of living. We've also celebrated the many inspiring achievements in our sector, from the grassroots to those impacting whole communities.

We are committed to providing factual and respectful coverage of issues in the community and social services sector, and sharing diverse stories, voices and experiences.

Small Change is broadcast on Radio Adelaide every Tuesday from 6-7pm.

radioadelaide.org.au/program/small-change

Have an idea for an interview or maybe you've got a story to share?
Email: Lisa Burns at lisa@sacoss.org.au

12 MONTHS OF SMALL CHANGE



1 hour per week on air
52 hours worth of programming



100 podcasts



1 Bilby Award



3 guests who went to the old Radio Adelaide location for their in-studio interview



110 interviews
31 SACOSS member organisations profiled
Including **11** SACOSS member organisations on Small Change for the first time

Interview topics



- 24** Lived experience
- 19** Welfare payments
- 14** Unemployment and poverty
- 11** Indigenous
- 10** Youth
- 8** Housing and homelessness; Mental health and wellbeing; Digital inclusion
- 7** Robo-debt; Ageing; Elder abuse
- 6** Child protection
- 5** Sector funding; Disability
- 4** Family and relationships; Emergency relief; Refugees and asylum seekers; Energy and water
- 3** Single parenting; Domestic violence; Penalty rates; Payday loans; Gambling; LGBTI; Volunteering
- 2** Sexual health; Tax; Climate change; Telecommunications; Architecture

SACOSS RECOGNISED AT BILBY AWARDS



Lisa Burns and Clinton Pryor (Courtesy of Noonie Raymond)

Small Change's Lisa Burns was named Runner-Up for Best Interview at the South Australian Community Broadcasters Association's Bilby Awards 2017. The Bilby Awards celebrate the contribution community radio makes to our community and to encourage high achievement within the sector. The awards are open to members, judged by community radio people and are assessed on creativity and excellence in broadcasting.

The interview was with Clinton Pryor, a Noongar, Yamatji, East Kimberley and Pilbara man who followed songlines and visited communities in a Walk For Justice for First Nations Peoples. While Clinton and the Clinton's Walk for Justice team have completed their 6000 km walk to Canberra and are now planning a trip to the UK to seek an

audience with the Queen next year, our conversation with Clinton on Kurna country stays in our recent memory and we feel honoured to have walked alongside him. We were moved by his calmness, presence and sense of purpose; qualities we're sure have contributed to his epithet, The Spirit Walker.


We feel honoured to receive this award and thank SACBA, the Radio Adelaide and SACOSS communities, and listeners and guests for their continued support of our program.

You can listen to our conversation with Clinton, his supporters and teammate Noonie Raymond, here:

radioadelaide.org.au/2017/04/25/from-perth-to-adelaide-clinton-walks-on-kurna-country/

FACT SHEETS

Throughout the year SACOSS compiles and distributes Fact Sheets designed to give a concise overview on a specific issue. You can read SACOSS' Fact Sheets at www.sacoss.org.au/publications/fact-sheets




Digital Disadvantage in South Australia - 2017

Digital inclusion is about ensuring that every Australian is able to make full use of digital technologies – to access education, online businesses and services, contact family and friends, and participate in the digital economy. The jobs of the future will be digital, but digital inclusion is about more than simply owning a computer or smartphone, it is about using digital technologies to improve skills and enhance quality of life and wellbeing.

Digital exclusion reflects and compounds other areas of disadvantage. People on lower incomes, older people and people living with disability are all likely to be less included in the digital world.

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index measures the extent of digital inclusion in Australia under three broad headings: Access, Affordability and Ability to use digital technologies.

South Australia rates poorly on the Australian Digital Inclusion Index.



Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2017
Technological Access: 58.5

South Australia: 58.5
New South Wales: 62.5
Victoria: 62.5
Queensland: 62.5
Western Australia: 62.5
Northern Territory: 62.5
Australian Capital Territory: 62.5

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index was produced by the Centre for Social Impact, Swinburne University of Technology, supported by Telstra, using data from Roy Morgan Research. <https://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/>

SA'S PROPOSED WAGERING TAX

A fair and reasonable tax to address the changing face of gambling in Australia

In its 2016-17 Budget, the South Australian State Government announced the introduction of a place of consumption wagering tax of 15% on the net revenue made by bookies' from bets made in SA, effective from 1 July 2017.

With the rise of online betting on sports and racing, international bookmakers have set up shop in virtual gambling law havens. The revenue they get from South Australian punters is taxed in the Northern Territory or Norfolk Island where gambling taxes are capped at very low levels. That is not fair to local bookies who pay gambling taxes here, or to the South Australian community who miss out on the revenue which could pay for vital services – including the harm caused by gambling.

South Australia's proposed wagering tax closes this tax loophole and taxes bookies' winnings where the bets are made – not in whatever jurisdiction the corporation holds its bookmaking licence.

This place of consumption wagering tax would see the big online bookmakers, like Sportsbet and Ladbrokes, pay gambling taxes in SA for the first time.

Small bookies, with net revenue of less than \$150,000 per year will be exempt from the tax.

\$550,000 per year from the wagering tax will go to the Gamblers Rehabilitation Fund to support problem gamblers. It is the first time that betting taxes will contribute to this fund which was until now solely supported by poker machine taxes.


A place of consumption Wagering Tax operates in the UK and is also set at 15 per cent.

The SA Wagering Tax is expected to raise \$9.2m per year, that is:

- \$9.2m of tax revenue that does not have to be found from payroll, land or vehicle taxes; or
- \$9.2m of services for the South Australian community.

The wagering tax is a tax on bookies, not a tax on punters.

For more information, go to www.sacoss.org.au/sa-wagering-tax



Public Opinion and the 2017-18 SA State Budget

In the first half of 2017 SACOSS released three reports based on a survey of 1,000 South Australians about their attitudes on a range of issues relating to state taxes, government expenditure and tax relief. This Fact Sheet compares some of the findings from these reports with what was outlined in the 2017-18 SA State Budget.

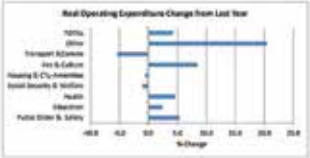
Expenditure

Survey said 68% of people want more money spent on public infrastructure and services. Only 22% thought the government should cut spending to meet budget pressures.

Budget delivered: no real inflation adjusted increase in expenditure over the forecasted estimates, and government expenditure declining as a proportion of the economy from 32.2% this year to 30.1% in 2020-21.


Survey said a more than two-thirds of people wanted more expenditure on health, education and social services.

Budget delivered: health, education and community services accounting for 34% of budgeted expenditure. In real terms, spending on health and education went up from 2016-17 to 2017-18, but the value of expenditure on social security declined by 1%.



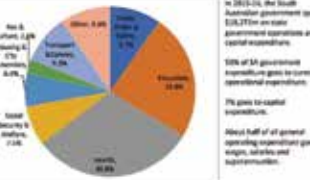
Survey said 18% of people support more investment in business prevention to deal with increasing health costs.

Budget delivered: a lot of healthcare and health infrastructure spending, but no new early intervention and primary health care investments.



South Australian Government Expenditure

State taxes pay for a variety of government services and public infrastructure that benefit the community, but are particularly needed by vulnerable and disadvantaged people.



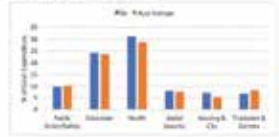
In 2015-16, the South Australian government spent \$18.77bn on state government operations and capital expenditure.

7% goes to capital expenditure.

About half of all general operating expenditure goes to wages, salaries and superannuation.

How does South Australian expenditure compare?

As a proportion of total government operational expenditure, South Australia spends more than any other Australian state or territory on health, above the national average in health, education, social services and housing and community services.





Centrelink Automated Debt Recovery ('Robo-Debt') Program

This program is wrong and must stop

In July 2018 Centrelink commenced piloting the automated debt recovery program. This program matches Centrelink and Australian Taxation Office data and identifies discrepancies in the information held by both agencies.

The measure was expected to recover \$1.3 billion over three years. The government has used data matching since the 1990s but Centrelink staff were involved in the decision making. Approximately 20,000 discrepancy notices were sent last year.

The new system has no human involvement. From November 2018 the government began sending out 25,000 notices each week to current and former Centrelink recipients. These notices are in effect debt notices seeking repayment ('recovery') of the discrepancy.

Key problems with the program include:

- Letters were sent through MyGov, which many people did not receive and the government subsequently announced that the person had a debt and owed a debt notice.
- Debt notices were sent to incorrect postal addresses and the first time people heard they and an alleged debt was through a debt collector.
- Alleged debts go back as far as 2005, making it difficult for people to prove they reported their income correctly at the time.
- Where people do receive correspondence the only way they can provide information is through the MyGov online portal. The portal is not intuitive and often leads people to inadvertently confirming they had a debt when they did not.
- The system seems to average out income the ATO has on record over a year without looking at fortnightly income earned (if any) whilst the person was receiving income support, resulting in inaccurate debts being issued.
- Where people report an alleged debt, Centrelink continues debt recovery action during the appeal process.
- Centrelink appears to automatically apply a 10% recovery fee on debts when a decision about this fee should be separate to the issuing of a debt.
- Many people have reported being unable to speak to someone at Centrelink on the phone or at a branch and directed to the online portal.

SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

HELPING TO DEVELOP
OUR SECTOR

SECTOR DEVELOPMENT
EVENTS

PUBLIC HEALTH MOU

ADVOCACY ON STUDENT
PLACEMENTS

SA NFP FUNDING
RULES AND GUIDELINES
(SANFRAG)

CARF CONSULTATION

ESSENTIAL SERVICES

AUSTRALIAN SERVICE
EXCELLENCE STANDARDS

HELPING TO DEVELOP OUR SECTOR

- > Convening the Essential Services Group – comprising SA consumer advocates in the area of energy and water.
- > participation in development of SA NFP Funding Rules and Guidelines (SANFRAG), including the successful completion of the whole-of-government policy for indexation of funding to NFPs
- > providing support for the Aboriginal Social Justice Coalition
- > A New Age For Older Workers roadshow, in partnership with COTA and funded through the Office for the Ageing
- > Providing governance training to various boards and committees

SECTOR DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

SACOSS presented and supported events in 2016-17 to help develop skills and knowledge within our sector, with themes ranging from digital disadvantage to youth detention, and how to decipher the SA Government Budget papers.

- > **A New Age for Older Workers (SACOSS & COTA joint events)**
27 July 2016 in Whyalla and
10 August 2016 in Mount Gambier
- > **3 Strategic Plan conversations**
 - *Will individualised funding distribution lead to increased equity, accountability and enhanced personalisation in human services?*
 - *Are we leaving our younger generations to pay for the largess and unwillingness of previous generations to confront major social, economic, and environmental concerns?*
 - *Is there a limit to charity and its special status?*3 sessions in August 2016
- > **Energy Consumer Protections Forum**
12 August 2016
- > **SACOSS Vulnerability and Affordability Conference**
2 November 2016
- > **David Chesterton's lecture on youth detention**
12 December 2016
- > **Working With Resilience Information Session**
8 February 2017
- > **The Deepening Divide - digital disadvantage in SA**
9 March 2017
- > **Amplify Your Health Impact with Professor Illona Kickbusch**
27 March 2017
- > **ACOSS Energy Consumers Forum (hosted by SACOSS)**
4 April 2017
- > **Linking Services for Mental Health and Wellbeing**
11 May 2017
- > **SACOSS & HESTA Boardroom Lunch**
15 June 2017
- > **Pre-Budget Training Session**
15 June 2017
- > **Budget Night Sector Briefing**
22 June 2017
- > **Post Budget Breakfast with the Treasurer**
29 June 2017
- > **Post Budget Breakfast with the Opposition Leader**
25 July 2017



PUBLIC HEALTH MOU

In 2017, we renewed our Public Health Partner Authority Agreement with the Department for Health and Ageing (DHA) for five years (2017 to 2021).

One of the outcomes from the first Agreement with the DHA through 2014 to 2016 was the development of a joint policy statement between SACOSS and DHA called “*A shared vision for improved community health and wellbeing*”.

The statement, developed and finalised in 2016, expresses the shared commitment and vision of SACOSS and DHA in continuing to work in partnership to support improved community health and public health outcomes.

In the coming year we look forward to establishing a Health and Wellbeing Alliance, drawing together sector organisations and other stakeholders to advance public health interests.

We will also be publishing a *Promoting Health and Wellbeing* booklet which will detail case studies from the SA community services sector.

SACOSS research project

In 2016, as part of our public health partnership agreement, SACOSS undertook a research project with the community services sector, looking at their role and their understanding of public health. In particular we examined their involvement, if any, in the development and implementation of the regional Public Health Plans, and their contact with the federally-funded Primary Health Networks.

Time and funding restraints meant that the scope of the project was limited but the key findings included:

- > NGO organisations contribute to the health and wellbeing of the community and are clear in what capacity.

- > NGOs however have less understanding about how they contribute to “public health”.
- > There are some effective networks and partnerships in place that address public health issues.
- > A small percentage of the project participants had heard of local public health plans and had attended a consultation.
- > There has been little to no engagement with Primary Health Networks.

Some important issues which were consistently raised throughout the project included:

- > Concerns about transitioning to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- > Effects of climate change and responding to extreme weather events.
- > Access to funding.
- > Effects of economic uncertainty on the community (specific to Whyalla).

NGO community service organisations clearly do play an important role in the ‘new’ public health, and SACOSS, local, state and federal governments need to work together to support these organisations to continue to work with disadvantaged South Australians. Addressing the social determinants of health is key to combating some of the issues associated with chronic diseases, as well as climate change and other issues relevant to public health. It is clear that if we are to seriously advance these issues it will be important for SACOSS to be properly resourced to enable this to be undertaken.

ADVOCACY ON STUDENT PLACEMENTS

In 2016-17 we continued to engage with the universities to advocate on behalf of the sector for improvements to university student placements. Social service agencies have historically provided placements for students – at no cost – because of a commitment to sustaining a future workforce of graduates that are work-ready, as well as other more immediate perceived benefits like assistance with project work.

However, when we asked our members about their needs regarding student placements and our potential role in supporting them, we were surprised at the level of engagement we received on the subject.

We provided feedback from member consultations to the social work faculties at Flinders University and the University of South Australia raising concerns about:

- > the increasing number of students requiring placement and thus the burden on sector organisations,
- > the pre-placement support and workplace readiness of students, and
- > the university processes when issues with student performance arise on placement.

Each university has acknowledged our feedback and responded differently. The discussion and work in this area is ongoing and of course the issue of placements arises not just in terms of university programs but also for people completing other post-secondary qualifications. Industry experiences and placement have become priorities in all areas of post-secondary education, creating considerable pressure for placements.

SANFRAG

Throughout the year SACOSS continued to be involved in discussions over the proposed SA Not-for-Profit Funding Rules and Guidelines (SANFRAG). The proposal to develop Guidelines were an outcome of the 2014 state election where we, along with others, highlighted the importance of our sector and how the short-term and one-sided funding arrangements created unnecessary problems and blockages to delivering services to vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

As noted in last year's Annual Report, this process has been as long as it has been frustrating. However, the last year has seen some significant progress.

The Department of Treasury and Finance took over the process on behalf of government and moved to align discussions much more closely with existing whole-of-government procurement guidelines. This had benefits for our sector in a number of areas and in seeing the process move forward, but it has also meant that in some ways we are trying to retro-fit the partnership model outlined in the government-sector *Stronger Together* agreement into a system built on commercial contracts.

Those debates continue, but one clear outcome from the process was the announcement by the Treasurer – at the SACOSS Post-Budget Breakfast – of the whole of government indexation policy. Instead of each department deciding what (if any) indexation rate they would apply to contracts in our sector, the new policy sets the indexation rate centrally four years in advance. Departments will be required to implement this rate in their contracts.

The certainty of funding and the application of indexation to many contracts that otherwise would not have indexation is a big win for our sector and will ensure that the value of service funding does not decrease over time, although the government also took the opportunity to revise the current Treasury indexation rate down in recognition of prevailing low inflation rates.

The rate will be set at 2% for 2017-18 and 2018-19, and at 2.5% for 2019-20 and 2020-21. The rate for 2021-22 will be announced next year. Where Fair Work Australia's Equal Remuneration Order applies, this should be added to the indexation rate.

There have inevitably been a few problems implementing this policy in that the delay in the process meant that some departments who were actually doing the right thing and passing on the full indexation amount had already announced the funding for 2017-18, and then had to wind it back to the reduced indexation rate.

Understandably, this was a problem for those organisations who had budgeted on the original amount, but also served to underline the broader problem of our sector being forced to sign contracts without certainty as to the amount of money involved. This is exactly what the new policy seeks to address by being clear, four years in advance what the indexation will be – and therefore how much will be paid for each year of a multi-year contract. And of course, for many other organisations who would not have received any or the full indexation, the new policy represented a great boost in funding.

Throughout the SANFRAG process, SACOSS continues to aim for a funding system and for contracts where our sector can know exactly what is required in their contracts and the amount they will be

paid, and that the terms can't be changed unilaterally by government. We were still some way from this at the end of the 2016-17 year, but the adoption of the indexation policy by government is a step in that direction.

CONSUMER ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH FUND FOR WATER (CARF)

SACOSS is funded by the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) to undertake water advocacy and research to address the needs of South Australian water consumers. SACOSS led a number of research projects in 2016/17 examining:

- > the perceptions and experiences of South Australian water consumers about their water and sewerage supply,
- > the particular experiences of customers who have had their water restricted due to non-payment of bills,
- > the impact of water pricing design on different customer cohorts, and
- > the value customers place on water pricing stability versus pricing volatility.

In addition, SACOSS ran a consultation process with consumer advocates, service providers, government and industry that identified further projects that could be funded by DCSI under the CARF.

On recommendation by SACOSS, the following consumer research projects were funded in 2016/17:

- > research into the experience of customers of minor and intermediate water suppliers conducted by the South Australian Financial Counsellors Association,
- > research into the experience of consumers living with a disability conducted by Julia Farr Purple Orange, and
- > research into the experience of renters conducted by Uniting Communities.

SACOSS will draw on findings from these research projects to continue to advocate in the interests of South Australian water consumers, and identify further projects for future CARF funding.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES GROUP (ESG)

SACOSS convenes a group of South Australian consumer advocates and service providers to share information, build expertise and develop policy and advocacy positions related to essential services such as energy and water.

In 2016-17 the ESG met four times and discussed a range of topics including the SA blackouts and broader system security issues, the Finkel Review, regulatory reviews, rule changes and determinations, community based energy, the Utilities Literacy Program, and the progress and findings of the CARF research projects.

AUSTRALIAN SERVICE EXCELLENCE STANDARDS

In 2016-17 SACOSS underwent a rigorous assessment which culminated in us receiving a Service Excellence Certificate under the Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES).

This step-by-step accreditation program is designed to develop the capacity of community organisations to strive towards continuous improvement in quality service delivery. Organisations complete self-assessments and an external assessment to achieve this internationally recognised accreditation that lasts for three years.

ASES is based on the following organisational principles:

- > customer and outcome focus
- > clear direction with accountability
- > continuous learning and innovation
- > valuing people and diversity
- > collaborative work practices
- > evidence-based decision making
- > social, environmental and ethical responsibility.

ASES is a fully accredited program under the International Society for Quality in Health and Social Care.



REPRESENTATION

MEMBERSHIP

SACOSS Organisational Members

(organisations financial between July 2016-June 2017)

Aboriginal Community Care (SA)

Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc
ac.care

Aged and Community Services Australia

Anglicare SA

Anti-Poverty Network SA

Australian Health Promotion Association SA

Australian Migrant Resource Centre

Australian Refugee Association Inc

Baptist Care (SA) Inc

Barkuma Inc

Better Hearing Australia (Adelaide)

Birthline Pregnancy Support Inc

Brain Injury SA

CARA Inc

Carers SA Inc

CareWorks SA

CBB the not4profit people

Centacare Catholic Family Services

Centacare Catholic Family Services CDPF

Child and Family Welfare Association of SA Inc

Chinese Welfare Services of SA Inc

Citizen Advocacy South Australia

City of Onkaparinga

Clubhouse SA Inc

Community Centres SA

Community Housing Council of SA Inc

Community Living Australia

Community Living Project Inc

Connecting Foster Carers - SA Inc

Council On The Ageing SA

Darwin Health Library

DOMA Association Inc

Drug Arm Australasia

ECH Inc

Endeavour Foundation

Enhanced Lifestyles

Foodbank SA

Good Shepherd Microfinance

Goodwood Community Services

Grandparents for Grandchildren SA Inc.

Habitat for Humanity Australia SA

Health Consumers Alliance of SA Inc

Hepatitis SA

Hills Community Options Inc

HomePlace

Hutt Street Centre Ltd

Inclusive Sport SA Inc.

Interchange Incorporated

Julia Farr Group

Junction Australia Ltd

JusticeNet SA

Legacy Club of Adelaide Inc

Legal Services Commission of SA

Life Without Barriers SA

Loxcare Inc

Lutheran Community Care

Marion Life Community Services Inc

Mental Health Coalition of SA Inc

Mental Illness Fellowship of South Australia Inc

Milang & District Community Association Inc

Mission Australia - SA Region

Multicultural Aged Care Inc

Multicultural Communities Council of SA

Network SA

Northern Health Network

Northern Suburbs Housing Community Inc

Northern Volunteering SA Inc

OARS Community Transitions

Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People

Owl Learning Australia

Pangula Mannamurna Aboriginal Corporation

Parkinson's South Australia Inc
 Quality Innovation Performance
 Reconciliation South Australia Inc
 Relationships Australia South Australia Ltd
 Riding for the Disabled Assoc SA Inc
 SA Country Carers
 SA Unions
 Safe Places for Children
 Save the Children
 Seniors Information Service Inc
 SHine SA Inc
 South Australian Financial Counsellors Association Inc
 South Australian Network of Drug and Alcohol
 Services
 St John's Youth Services Inc
 Statewide Superannuation Trust
 STTARS - Survivors of Torture & Trauma
 SYC LTD
 The Australian Centre for Social Innovation
 The Broughton Art Society Inc
 The Salvation Army
 The Smith Family
 The Wyatt Benevolent Institution Inc
 Time for Kids
 Together SA Incorporated
 UnitingCare SA
 UnitingCare Wesley Bowden Inc
 UnitingCare Wesley Country SA Incorporated
 UnitingCare Wesley Port Adelaide Inc
 Unity Housing Company Ltd.
 Victim Support Service Inc
 Vietnamese Women's Association SA Inc
 Welfare Rights Centre SA

West Coast Youth & Community Support Inc
 Women's Community Centre SA Inc
 Working Women's Centre SA Inc
 Youth Affairs Council of SA Inc

SACOSS Lifetime Members

Mr Phillip Beddall
 Mr Harvey Brown
 Mr Brian Butler
 Prof. Ed Carson
 Mr Kym Davey
 Mr Michael Dawson
 Ms Marj Ellis
 Ms Colleen Fitzpatrick
 Ms Gael Fraser
 Mr Leigh Garrett
 Mr Peter Hall
 Ms Sheila Hall
 Ms Christine Halsey
 Mr Mark Henley
 Mr Simon Kneebone
 Ms Wendy Malycha
 Ms Margaret McKenzie
 Ms Joy Noble
 Ms Louise Portway
 Mr Lange Powell
 Ms Ruth Prescott
 Mr Simon Schrapel
 Ms Pam Simmons
 Mr Brian Ward
 Mr. Mark Waters
 The Hon. Andrew Wilson
 Mr Ian Yates AM

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of SACOSS leads to positive social change in South Australia by supporting SACOSS to campaign for social justice.

SACOSS welcomes and encourages member participation in a variety of activities that enhance the voice of the community on behalf of vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians. Membership of SACOSS supports our vital and successful campaigning for social justice.

www.sacoss.org.au/membership



COSS Directors Meeting in Adelaide: (from left to right) Ross Womersley (SACOSS), Kym Goodes (TasCOSS), Louise Giolitto (WACOSS), Emma King (VCOSS), Susan Helyar (ACTCOSS), Cassandra Goldie (ACOSS), Tracy Howe (NCOSS), Mark Henley (QCOSS) **INSET:** Wendy Morton (NTCOSS)

COSS NETWORK COLLABORATION

SACOSS is proud to be part of a national network of COSS organisations – one in each state and territory of Australia, as well as the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS). In general, each state COSS focuses their work on social justice and sector issues specific to their state jurisdiction, with ACOSS taking the lead on federal issues.

With the continued blurring of responsibilities across the federation it is now more complicated than ever to discern where policy levers and responsibilities actually lie for many issues.

Each state COSS is independent and unaffiliated, yet in practice we operate in a collaborative and collegiate manner in order to increase our impact and in the interest of achieving our shared vision.

Collaboration is facilitated through a number of channels but is lead primarily from regular meetings and teleconferences between the Directors/CEOs of each COSS.

During 2016-17, the COSS Network came together to collaborate on a number of issues including:

- > Articulating the network's value proposition
- > Work on anti-poverty issues
- > Understanding the machinery we need to put in place to make for the best possible communication and collaboration across the network
- > Taking account of opportunities and threats to advocacy in the current environment

This work is continuing and will potentially become more important as ACOSS moves to change the structure of its Board, reducing the presence of COSS from representatives of all to just three elected from across the network.

EXTERNAL COMMITTEES

Representatives and nominees of SACOSS sat on the following boards and committees in 2016-17. SACOSS thanks them all for their time and commitment.

ACOSS Board of Governors

Helen Connolly

Anti-Poverty Week State Facilitation Group

Dr Catherine Earl

Australian Gas Networks' SA Reference Group

Jo De Silva

Child Safety & Wellbeing Advisory Panel

Ross Womersley

Courts Community Reference Group

Dr Susan Errington

Dame Roma Mitchel Trust Fund for Children and Young People

Colleen Fitzpatrick

ElectraNet Consumer Advisory Panel

Jo De Silva

Essential Services Commission of SA (ESCOSA) Consumer Advisory Committee

Mark Henley

Ross Womersley

Justice Reinvestment SA

Anne Bainbridge

SA Dental Service Consumer Advisory Panel

Phillip Beddall

SA Water Residential Customer Council

Ross Womersley

UniSA School of Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy Advisory Group

Ross Womersley

SA National Framework for Child Protection Partnership Group

Simon Schrapel

SECRETARIAT 2016-17

CEO

Ross Womersley

Senior Research & Policy Officers

Dr Catherine Earl (part time)

Jo De Silva (full time)

Dr Greg Ogle (part time)

Vanessa Musolino (full time)

Phil Saunders (full time, 1 year contract, left June 2017)

Policy Officer

Rebecca Law (full time, started June 2017)

Georgina Morris (part time, started June 2017)

Eliza Schioldann (full time, Oct 2016 until April 2017)

Senior Project Officer

Victoria Morton (part time, contract finished May 2017)

Communications Officer

Tania Baxter (part time)

Radio Producer - Small Change

Lisa Burns (part time)

Radio Assistant

Bonnie Parker (casual, started Nov 2016)

Office & Finance Coordinator

Libby Connell (part time)

Finance & Admin Assistant

Lucyna Goodall (part time, started July 2016)

Events Coordinator

Vivian Clark (full time, until Aug 2016)

Gabrielle Bond (part time, started Dec 2016)

SACOSS ACKNOWLEDGES

FUNDING FROM



Government of South Australia

Department for Communities
and Social Inclusion



Government of South Australia

Department of State Development



Government of South Australia

Department of Treasury
and Finance



SPONSORSHIP FROM



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

TREASURER'S REPORT

INCOME & EXPENDITURE
STATEMENT

ASSETS & LIABILITIES
STATEMENT

TREASURER'S REPORT

SACOSS has had another eventful year which finished with us receiving \$1,480,971 in income. Compared to last year, this was a decrease of approximately \$100,000. Total expenditure for the year of \$1,471,073 was also a decrease from the prior year, resulting in a small surplus of \$9,898.

The patterns across income and expenditure broadly match previous years and this is attributable to the fact that almost all the income we receive is tied to delivering similar types of outcomes as in previous years. The main differences comparing this year to the prior year on the income side relate to the following:

- > A one-off increase in our Consumer Advocacy and Research Fund grants for our work in water. The increased grant funding from the Consumer Advocacy and Research Fund arose because we only received part-year funding in 2016. We expect ongoing funding to be closer to \$210,000 per annum for this work.
- > Increased revenue from conferences and sponsorships, together with research and development.

At the same time we saw decreased income this year from Energy Consumers Australia; Other Grants and Memberships. This is because we applied for fewer grants over the year. Similarly, we sought out less funding from other sources.

Of most concern on the income side is the drop in membership fees, and we will place renewed focus on this in the next financial year. We expect membership income will be boosted with enhancements to the database and invoicing in 2018.

The most substantial increases in expenses relate to employee expenses which increased by \$82,000 due to additional funding received for tax reform, energy and water issues. There was also a small increase of \$15,000 in consultancy fees. These payments relate to obtaining critical high level analysis and technical advice in relation to our research and advocacy work in essential services.

In contrast, expenses in relation to professional services decreased substantially by \$87,000 against last year because in the previous year there were large legal fees incurred in challenging the SAPN electricity network regulatory decision. Similarly, both conference costs, and travel and accommodation were down substantially principally because we did not have the same levels of activity.

We note again for clarity that while travel costs look to be a very substantial expense line, these almost all result from the role SACOSS plays in convening the National Consumer Energy Roundtable. This important roundtable gathering is held in a range of venues around Australia 3 or 4 times each year and thus results in large travel and accommodation costs to enable the attendance by consumer advocates

from across the country. SACOSS receives a specific grant from Energy Consumers Australia to coordinate and fund the work of the roundtable.

Possibly the most noteworthy expenses relate to the Board's decision to invest in upgrading the offices and community rooms at Marjorie Black House. The property has been in real need of a refurbishment for some time and the Board undertook a detailed analysis of a number of options, including potentially selling the property and relocating. Ultimately, the Board concluded that the most sensible option was to make a substantial investment in upgrading the property and furnishings (spending nearly \$375,000) which has yielded an enhanced asset and a much more attractive property, better suited for purpose as offices and meeting rooms. Once the renovations were completed the property was revalued at \$1,620,000 which resulted in increasing the value of total assets by a healthy \$396,000 to just over \$2,500,000.

The reports included here are summary reports and a detailed financial report is available via either the SACOSS website or on request. Secondly, our auditors, Nexia Edwards Marshall, have again issued an unqualified report and this is included in the detailed financial report.

I also note that it would simply not be possible to deliver the outstanding work outlined in other parts of this report without the funds we receive, and would like to again thank all of our member organisations, supporters and sponsors along with the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, Energy Consumers Australia, the Department of State Development, the Department of Treasury and Finance, and SA Department for Health and Ageing for their continued support in 2016/17.

This has been another successful year for SACOSS and as we look forward into the future, the Board is acutely aware we must do more work towards securing SACOSS' long term sustainability and independence. In the short term we will also be looking to our members to ensure we have a good resource base on which to mount an effective public policy campaign in the lead up to the state election in March 2018.

In closing, I would like to extend thanks to my fellow Board members, the SACOSS staff who continue to do outstanding work within quite limited resources, and specifically, I want to take the opportunity to personally acknowledge Libby Connell, our long-standing Office and Finance Coordinator. Libby is now embracing a new phase in her life and on behalf of all of us, I wish her a fulfilling and very happy retirement.

Emma-Louise Crosby
Treasurer

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2017

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE INC.

	2017 \$	2016 \$
Income		
DCSI Grant	407,344	393,265
SA Energy Consumer Advocacy	200,000	200,000
Consumer Advocacy & Research	251,723	139,006
Tax Reform	137,918	115,610
Energy Consumer Australia	144,219	377,088
Other Grants	50,820	117,631
Member subscriptions	48,547	61,554
Research & Development	122,546	86,209
Conference & Sponsorship	97,922	59,184
Other Income	20,022	32,268
Total Income	1,480,971	1,581,814
Expenses		
Conference Costs	57,641	102,519
Consultancy Fees	240,944	226,478
Depreciation	13,784	9,410
Employment	911,013	819,117
Office Accommodation	30,659	31,756
Computers & IT	12,253	10,846
Printing, postage and stationery	14,201	25,794
Insurance	12,528	9,073
Professional services	32,632	119,631
Reference materials	14,034	11,232
Travel and accommodation	98,379	125,209
Equipment	5,590	5,789
Other	22,756	10,841
Loss on disposal of property	4,659	
Total Expenses	1,471,073	1,507,695
Net Current Year Surplus	9,898	74,119
Other comprehensive income		-
Total comprehensive income for the year	9,898	74,119

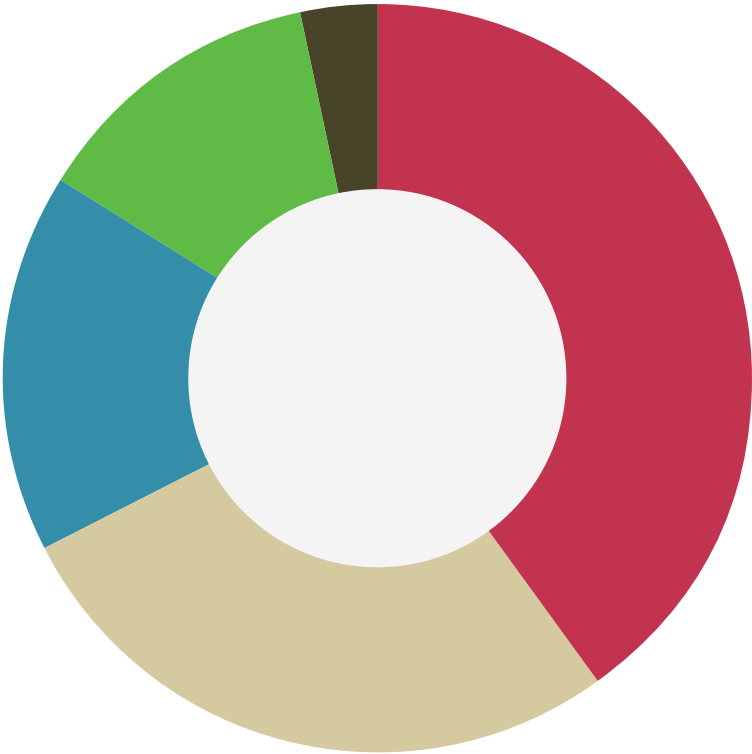
ASSETS AND LIABILITIES STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2017

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE INC.

	2017 \$	2016 \$
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	744,181	1,222,565
Accounts receivable and other debtors	31,937	79,521
Other current assets		1,339
Total Current Assets	776,118	1,303,425
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	1,758,211	834,702
Total Non-Current Assets	1,758,211	834,702
Total Assets	2,534,329	2,138,127
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts payable and other payables	89,375	48,326
Employee provisions	128,731	77,257
Grants in Advance	152,715	404,838
Total Current Liabilities	370,821	530,421
Total Non-Current Liabilities	24,343	45,938
Total Liabilities	395,164	576,359
NET ASSETS	2,139,165	1,561,768
EQUITY		
Reserves	1,626,211	1,058,712
Retained surplus	512,954	503,056
TOTAL EQUITY	2,139,165	1,561,768

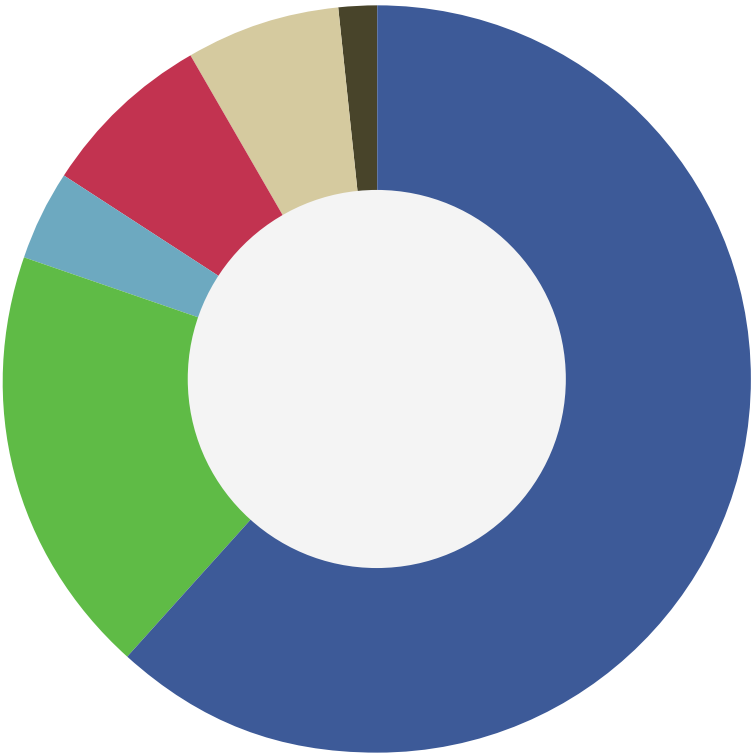
Income

Energy & Water	595,852
Peak Body Role	407,344
Other Income	240,490
Other grants	188,738
Memberships	48,547
TOTAL	1,480,971



Expenses

Employment	911,013
Professional Advice	273,576
Conferences	57,641
Building & Administration	107,708
Travel & Accommodation	98,379
Other	22,756
TOTAL	1,471,073



ROOMS FOR HIRE

MARJORIE BLACK COMMUNITY ROOM

A flexible, pleasant space that seats approximately 60 theatre-style. Features include laptop, data projector and screen, flat screen television, lectern, electronic whiteboard, flip chart easel, audio hearing loop, trestle tables, kitchenette facilities including microwave, bar fridge and urn, fully accessible entry ramp and bathroom facilities.



DAPHNE GUM ROOM

A small room that comfortably seats 10 around a central table, with a fixed flat screen television and flip easel chart.



HIRER'S INFORMATION

These beautifully renovated rooms are located at the rear of the SACOSS premises at 47 King William Road, Unley. The venue is close to bus and tram stops and there is plenty of free parking available in the side streets.

Room availability calendar, booking forms and terms and conditions are all available on our website at sacoss.org.au/room-hire

For further enquiries or to request a time to see the rooms prior to booking, contact Gabrielle Bond (SACOSS Events Coordinator) on 8305 4224 or 0401 969 646, or email gabie@sacoss.org.au

South Australian Council of Social Service

Marjorie Black House
47 King William Road
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SACOSS

*South Australian Council
of Social Service*