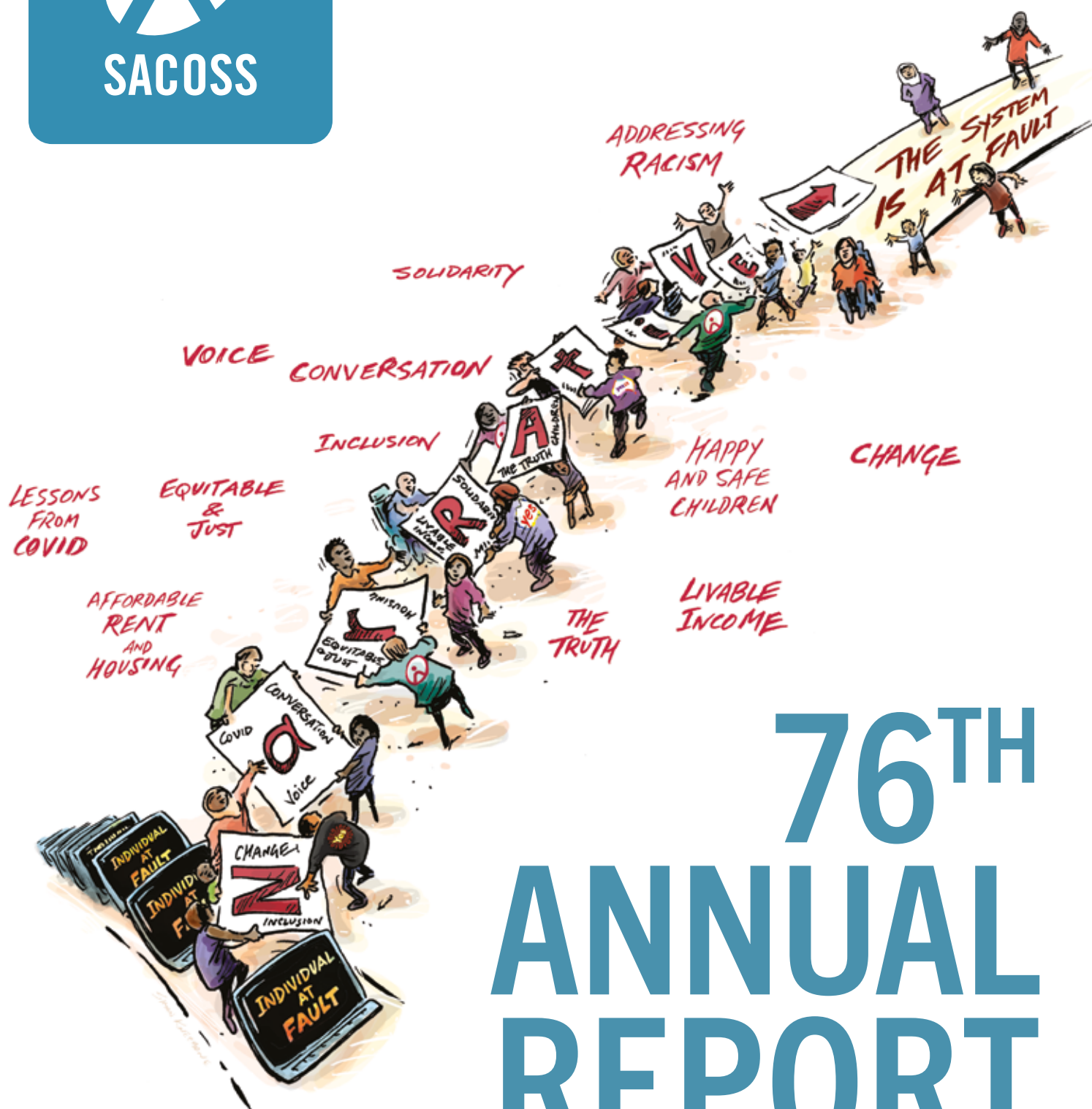




SACOSS



76TH ANNUAL REPORT

South Australian Council of Social Service
Advocating for a Just SA

2022–23



SACOSS is the South Australian Council of Social Service, the peak body for the non-government health and community services sector in South Australia.

We **envision** a future of justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians. To achieve this vision, we **speak out** on issues that affect our community, our state, our nation and our world. We **lead and support** our community to take action. We hold governments, business and communities to account – especially when their actions disadvantage vulnerable people.

We believe that developing a fair and just community is possible. We believe that a thriving community sector will help to address poverty and disadvantage. And we will continue to speak with, alongside and for all South Australians – no matter who you are, where you live or what your current circumstances are.


Front cover image: 'Changing the narrative', by Adelaide cartoonist and social commentator Simon Kneebone. Simon is a SACOSS life member whose works have appeared in the *New Internationalist*, *Pro Bono* and many more publications.

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SACOSS acknowledges the traditional lands of the Kaurna people on which we live and work, and pay our respects and acknowledge the Kaurna people as the custodians of the Adelaide region and the Greater Adelaide Plains. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, and appreciate the sovereignty and cultural knowledge that is held and shared. We underscore the importance of Aboriginal-led responses to address the interests and rights of Aboriginal families and communities.

Strategic Plan 2022-2027

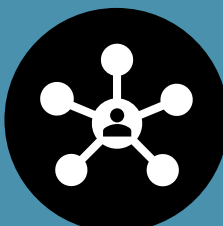
Our vision is for justice, opportunity
and shared wealth for all South Australians

DEVELOPING A FAIR AND JUST COMMUNITY

Advocate for Policy Solutions
Providing solutions to eradicate and
reduce poverty, inequality and injustice

Change the Narrative
Challenging poverty stereotypes &
amplifying the voices of people who
experience poverty, inequality and injustice

Lead Awareness
Identifying, exposing & raising awareness
about poverty, inequality and injustice



Build Support & Influence
Engaging others to become allies in
influencing decision-makers

Foster Collaborative Action
Building alignment & shared purpose
in the community services sector



Promote & Inform
Sharing information, knowledge & innovation,
to drive better policy and practice

CULTIVATING AN INFORMED & THRIVING COMMUNITY SECTOR

Our Purpose

To advocate, collaborate, lead and mobilise to eliminate poverty, inequality and injustice in South Australia.

Some Key Principles Underpinning Our Work

- Human rights are at the core of addressing poverty and injustice
- Social equity and justice requires committed community services organisations
- Public policy should have equitable impacts on people
- Community engagement and collective action effects change
- Peak bodies positively contribute to democracy and civil society

SACOSS Values Demonstrated in How We Aspire to Work

- Respect - Partnership - Courage - Inclusion - Fairness**
- We value, draw on and amplify the direct experiences of people affected by poverty, inequality and injustice.
 - We promote and advance the research and evidence base to drive advocacy priorities and policy solutions.
 - We maintain productive relationships across the political spectrum.
 - We work in collaboration with, draw on the wisdom and expertise of, and represent our diverse member base.
 - We are transparent in our work and we consult widely.
 - We lead and support collaborative initiatives for a thriving community sector.
 - We work together as a team to achieve our goals with integrity and accountability.

MEMBERSHIP AND EVENTS



184	MEMBERS
100	MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES
780	PEOPLE CAME TO ONE OR MORE OF OUR EVENTS
27	CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES PROVIDED TO MEMBERS

POLICY



35	SUBMISSIONS AND JOINT STATEMENTS
18	REPORTS AND RESOURCES

ONLINE



22,254	WEBSITE VISITORS
78,222	WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS
106,575	FACEBOOK PAGE AND POST REACH
106,740	LINKEDIN IMPRESSIONS
90,415	TWITTER IMPRESSIONS

COMMUNICATIONS



22	eBULLETINS
38	EVENT NEWS UPDATES
29	MEDIA RELEASES AND ALERTS
25	MEMBER ADVISORIES & MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

In our last Annual Report, we took the opportunity to remind ourselves about the work of SACOSS across our journey of more than 75 years. It was obvious that there were many parallels with the issues our founders faced and the issues we are still facing today.

This, in and of itself, points to the fact that advocating for social change is, and has never been, easy. However, as we reflect on the last year, one of the new challenges that has clearly emerged is the increasing absence of any consensus around what might constitute the “truth”, let alone agreement about its importance in social and political life.

One of the issues that inevitably challenges our political leaders is public trust. This trust is always undermined whenever our political leaders fail to live up to their promises. But in a world led by a small cadre of self-interested media barons and with the explosion of social media platforms, we are now observing an almost nuclear-like detonation in the spread of lies and misinformation. Lies and misinformation that through their repeated assertion come to be thought of as fact and sometimes, despite the fiction, almost impossible to try and correct.

Nowhere has this been more evident than in the USA where Trumpian politics have shown little regard for truth. With the increasing capacity of AI tools, and the widespread adoption of a wide range of social media platforms, mis- and disinformation, fear mongering and even outright lies are frequently infiltrating all aspects of community and political life. And these vehicles are (increasingly) being deliberately used to erode trust and sow community discord across the western world; in fact, used by powerful interest groups, right throughout the entire globe.

Whenever the conditions and living circumstances of many people feel increasingly precarious, an even more important quality for our community to have in our governments and institutions is trust. The erosion of trust without proper foundation is seriously problematic – particularly as it’s divisive.

Over the last few years the world endured the impact of the pandemic. Movement was limited and all sorts of controls put in place to control infection. And despite some very effective public health-led interventions millions of people across the world lost their lives. In Australia over 20,000 people have now died from Covid and almost 11 million are reported to have now had the illness.

At the same time, many people lost their jobs and their incomes, with more than 800,000 people joining un- and underemployment queues. While almost all of us saw our lives restricted, not everyone experienced the same costs and consequences. And some – those who retained work or had significant investment portfolios – saw their spending reduced and savings accumulate through the pandemic.

But many other people had their worlds shaken to the core and some have not yet recovered. So when mis- and disinformation is allowed to spread unheeded, let alone increasingly embraced as a tool to win and wield power, facts and any agreed truth is increasingly discarded as irrelevant. This leads to people being progressively divided and more easily encouraged to believe their governments and their institutions really don’t have their interests at heart.

This is a real challenge for advocates for justice and opportunity like SACOSS in this moment. It becomes very difficult to get widespread agreement about what the problem is that needs fixing, especially as commercial and political interests actively seed disinformation in an effort to defend and advance their own interests.

Nowhere does this seem more evident than in discussions about climate change and its growing impacts. The science is categorical and the evidence is widespread. And yet, with so many commercial and political interests deeply embedded in activities that directly impact on our climate, we see a growth in motherhood announcements of concern but not necessarily the courage to do the hard work and implement the policies that would really address the issues at their core.

For SACOSS, the real concern is that the consequences of inaction, or stalled action, or misdirected action, will always have the biggest implications for those who have the least resources at their disposal. This was one of the reasons we thought it was imperative to actively oppose the State Government’s changes to protest laws and penalties. Another was that in a world where uncomfortable truths increasingly need to be revealed and pointed to, the ability and willingness of citizens to express their opposition and concern peacefully remains paramount. One of the important mechanisms for doing this is via activation: sometimes protest is one of the only remaining ways to draw attention to an issue.



It's also why we have maintained our fierce advocacy about the importance of raising the age of criminal responsibility. The science is clear: even at 16, children and young people don't have a genuine sense of the consequences of their actions.

It's why SACOSS was so clear about our commitment to embrace the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its invitation to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through establishing a Constitutionally-enshrined Voice to Parliament, working for Treaty and undertaking Truth-telling about the impact of our colonial history.

It's why we continue to advocate so strongly for things like significant reinvestment in building public housing; ensuring low income households and renters have access to the things that will help them limit and reduce the amount of energy they require to warm and cool their homes; ensuring everyone gets to share in the benefits of digital technologies; and ensuring the voices of those who rely on our health and other systems are properly heard.

But let's be in no doubt. There are very strong forces at play that, for various reasons, will work very hard to shut down anything that looks like opposition. This can include opposition from community groups and activists arguing for change to ensure the longer-term wellbeing of community

members. And in many instances these efforts to shut down such views is by dominating narratives through the spread of mis- and disinformation.

SACOSS remains sincerely committed to identifying, exposing and raising awareness about poverty and disadvantage. We will always challenge ill-informed narratives about poverty and disadvantage and remain committed to amplifying the voices of people who experience that poverty or disadvantage. Of course, one of the most ill-informed narratives that pervades is that poverty is principally the fault of an individual rather than being caused by systemic failures.

We will also call for controls that seek to drive out the mass spread of misinformation through the press and all social media channels, and encourage our colleagues in the media to return to providing well-informed factually based reporting. We know that if inequality thrives, division across our community grows.

With our thanks to every one of our Board members, our terrific secretariat team, and our members and allies who have supported and engaged with us as we have fought for justice in 2022-23.

In solidarity,

David Panter
SACOSS Chair

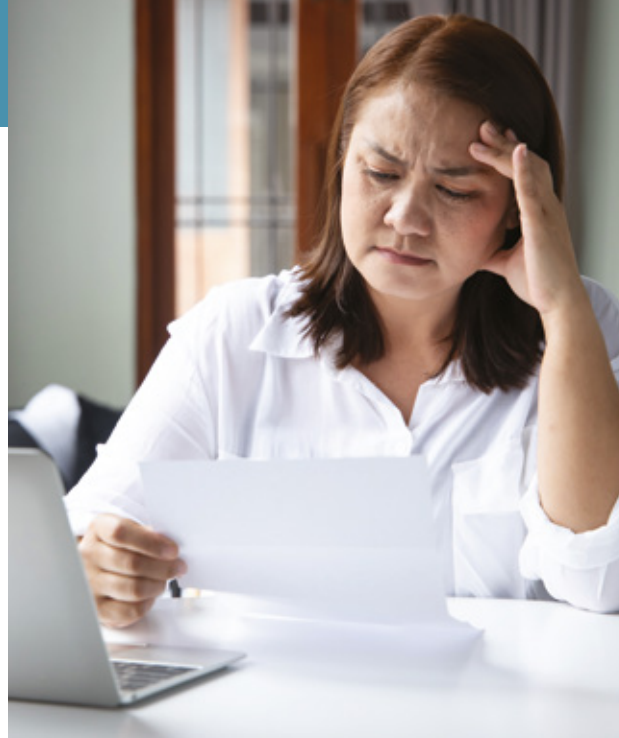
Ross Womersley
SACOSS CEO



A Livable Income for All

KEY ACTIVITIES

- » Supporting ACOSS's national campaign to raise the rate for social security payments
- » Advocating for a better concessions system in South Australia
- » Targeting the improvement of cost of living, energy, private motoring and ambulance concessions in particular



08

76TH ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23 | A FAIR & JUST COMMUNITY

The increase in the cost of living has been a major focus of media debate and public policy throughout 2022-23, but SACOSS has always known that these pressures are greatest for those on the lowest incomes. Necessities account for a greater proportion of low-income budgets, so simply “cutting back” is often not possible or advisable, and many low-income households have fewer savings or other options to fall back on.

For this reason, we have continued to support Australian Council of Social Service's (ACOSS) campaign at the national level for increases to key social security payments, most notably to JobSeeker and similar payments. Given the current national rental crisis, ACOSS has also called for an increase in the amount of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) paid to renters on Centrelink payments. While this year's federal budget included some modest measures in these areas, payments like JobSeeker remain grossly inadequate and CRA is not available to renters on very low incomes outside the Centrelink system. Given SACOSS' research on waged poverty, this has been a focus of our advocacy – both with ACOSS and directly to government.

At the state level, our major focus on a livable income has been in the area of state government concessions. The South Australian government offers a range of discounts, subsidies or payment exemptions to assist people on low incomes meet basic living costs. These concessions are extremely important, but as we argued in our 2021 *State of Concessions* report, the concessions system in SA presents a patchwork of different payments with varying eligibility criteria. The system is complex to navigate and creates poverty premiums where those on higher incomes get more support than

people struggling on the lowest incomes. We highlighted more of these poverty premiums in a Concessions Policy Brief produced in January 2023.

Before the last state election, the then Opposition recognised the problems with the current concessions system and promised a major review. That review started in 2023 and SACOSS has been involved on the cross-departmental Steering Committee and on the Community Reference Group which provides stakeholder input.

Prior to the review getting underway, SACOSS' State Budget Submission highlighted the key concessions for reform which would provide most cost of living relief for households. These were:

- Cost of Living Concession;
- Energy Bill Concession;
- Private Motoring Concessions; and
- Ambulance Concessions

We have continued to highlight the need for reform to broaden eligibility and improve the targeting of these concessions, as well as developing options for share-householders on low incomes who often miss out on concessions simply because they live in a share-house.

In addition, SACOSS is grateful for philanthropic funding secured from Mannifera and the Wyatt Trust for a deliberative democracy process to provide in-depth citizen's input into concessions reform in the next year.

The government's review of concessions (and the SACOSS campaign) continues in 2023-24.



Leaving No-one Behind in the Digital World

KEY ACTIVITIES

- » Highlighting the impact of the impending closure of the 3G network
- » Significant focus on digital issues in the regions through the Keys to the Digital World project
- » Advocacy for an overarching state government digital inclusion strategy

Digital technologies now take an increasingly central role in our economic and social life, but the ‘digital divide’ remains a critical issue.

As more people, businesses and government services go online, the disadvantages of being digitally excluded increase; the digital divide becomes narrower but deeper. This digital exclusion reflects and compounds other areas of disadvantage, with people on lower incomes, older people, and people living with disability all likely to be less included in the digital world. COVID-19 measures also put some of these challenges into stark relief, with the online world becoming more and more important.

Access and affordability remain as key challenges. The latest data suggests that energy bills are more likely than telecommunication bills to cause financial hardship and are given higher priority by customers alongside housing — but (or because of this) telecommunications disconnections are more common.

Using our seat on the telecommunications’ regulator’s (ACMA) consumer consultative forum, we continued to raise issues that impact on vulnerable people, including the potential impact of the impending closure of the 3G network. This may cause a loss of coverage in a few regional areas, and businesses and consumers may have to replace devices that operate on the 3G networks (for instance, some EFTPOS machines, and some personal alarms).

We also worked with other consumer organisations to put forward a strong position in relation to the review of the Telecommunications Consumer Protection Code (TCP) – essentially arguing that more of the same was not good enough and a new approach is required. This approach had some

success with the federal Minister moving to directly regulate requirements for support of people in financial hardship, while the review of the TCP continues.

In 2022-23 SACOSS also focused on the significant and enduring regional digital divide.

Our ‘Keys To The Digital World’ project, funded by the Local Government Association, saw us visit eight different regional councils to learn about how the regional digital divide is affecting communities. This project is focused on how libraries and community centres can lessen that divide, and on identifying additional digital inclusion services that need to be resourced to meet community needs.

We consulted with 17 regional libraries and 12 regional community centres and with people who benefit from the digital inclusion services provided by these organisations, such as classes, drop-in support, and assistance with online government applications. We also talked to people experiencing digital exclusion, including age pensioners, older JobSeekers and other regional stakeholders.

We targeted three of SA’s most digitally-excluded LGAs – Karoonda East Murray, Peterborough, and Yorke Peninsula – where there are limited face-to-face services, meaning growing pressure to engage services online, as well as the major regional centre of Mount Gambier. These engagements were supplemented with face-to-face remote interviews with other individuals and organisations from across regional SA.

Finally, we note that, despite growing digital inequality, our state government is still without an overarching digital inclusion strategy. There was a \$200 million investment in further upgrading the government’s ICT systems and portals in the June state budget (over 5 years from 2023-24), but there was little resourcing for the digital skills programs desperately needed to build digital ability. There were no new measures to assist adults who struggle to get online. SACOSS will continue to advocate for a comprehensive digital inclusion strategy to be developed and looks forward to participating in consultation around a newly announced Statewide Connectivity Strategy.



A Just Housing System

KEY ACTIVITIES

- » Comprehensive submission to Inquiry into Housing Availability
- » Working with other organisations to push for bolder reforms to Residential Tenancies Act
- » Focus on affordability in both regional and metropolitan South Australia

While housing debates can often be dominated by themes such as house prices and interest rates, SACOSS has long focused our housing advocacy on renters because they are likely to have lower incomes and struggle with housing affordability compared to mortgagees. The precarious position of renters is now at the centre of housing debates – unfortunately mostly because of lack of availability and sky-rocketing rent prices has created a rental housing crisis. However, we have also been highlighting the hidden costs of renting, such as high energy costs in inefficient housing and the health impacts of sub-standard housing.

These points formed part of a much more comprehensive housing agenda in the submission we made to state parliament’s Economic and Finance Committee Inquiry into Housing Availability in May 2023 (and in oral evidence and a Supplementary Submission in June). The submission contained 12 key recommendations in a range of areas, including:

- The importance of ensuring minimum housing standards;
- Cost of living supports for renters;
- Measures to increase renters’ rights;
- The role and importance of public housing (see below);
- New housing supply and finance models; and
- Property tax reform, including an opt-in scheme of replacing stamp duty with an annual land tax (to assist with affordability and fairness) and a vacancy tax (to encourage supply).

This Housing Availability submission forms the policy base for much of our current public commentary on housing issues.

Social Housing

SACOSS has long argued that public and community housing is not simply a welfare measure for those excluded from the housing market, but is also a vital part of housing supply with the potential to put downward pressure on rent prices across the market. In this context, we have been pleased to see the long decline of South Australia’s public housing estate finally stopped.

In February 2023 the state government announced a new policy, cleverly titled *A Better Housing Future* (the previous government’s policy was called *Our Housing Future*). Beyond the cleverness



with the name, the new policy actually contained a number of good reforms, including a commitment to stop the sell-off of public housing and new investment to begin to increase the overall level of social housing.

This investment was modest (564 new houses over four years), but coupled with the Federal government's Social Housing Accelerator investment this would see the first substantive increase in a long time in the numbers of social and community houses in the state. We welcomed these initiatives, but continued to call for more investment as the new initiatives will probably only cover the needs generated by increasing population – they may not increase the social housing share of the housing market.

Residential Tenancies Act

In late 2022 the state government announced a review of the *Residential Tenancies Act*, the major legislation governing the letting of rental properties and the regulation of relations and rights of landlords and tenants. SACOSS made a submission to the review and wrote directly to the Minister, noting that most of the reform ideas canvassed were good, but that they did not address the major issue of the increasing cost of housing resulting from rent price increases and the energy inefficiency of many rental properties.

In that process, we joined with Better Renting, the Anti-Poverty Network, Uniting Communities and Shelter SA to push for bolder reforms. Together we identified the main reforms as:

- Capping rent prices to CPI to stop excessive rent increases;
- Prohibiting no-cause evictions to give renters some security of tenure and allow them to exercise their rights without fear of eviction;
- Introducing minimum energy standards to protect renters from exorbitant energy bills; and
- Changes to enable, or make it easier for, pet owners to rent.

Operating as a loose alliance, we met with Ministers, cross-benchers and the Opposition, as well as preparing a joint statement calling for fairer rental laws.

The government legislated a first tranche of reforms of the Act in June 2023, mainly focused

on protection of tenants' information, but they also decreased the amount required for rental bonds – thus making entry a little bit more affordable. More importantly, they promised a second round of legislation to deal with broader issues later in 2023. We, with our allies, advocated for greater boldness in this second tranche of reforms, and that campaign continues.



Public Information

Alongside and contributing to this advocacy, two of our quarterly Cost of Living Updates were focused on housing. In October 2022 we produced a report on rental affordability in regional South Australia. Drawing on census data we found that the increasing cost of renting coincided with a decline in the provision of public housing. For the December quarter, we reported on rental affordability in Adelaide where we highlighted the state electorates where the rental affordability challenges would hit hardest and called on the MPs representing these electorates to champion affordability measures.

Beyond the Cost of Living Updates, SACOSS also produced three Policy Briefs summarising our concerns and policies on the *Residential Tenancies Act*, public housing and rental affordability more broadly. As always, we also took whatever opportunities were available to put the issue of rental affordability to the public via social and broadcast media.

Climate Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience

KEY ACTIVITIES

- » Second Implementation Plan (IP2) for the People at Risk in Emergencies Framework
- » Release of mid-term report for PaRE project

In 2022-23, SACOSS delivered the *People at Risk in Emergencies: A Collaborative Approach* (PaRE) project in partnership with Australian Red Cross. PaRE is funded under the Disaster Risk Reduction Grants Program by the Australian government and the South Australian government from May 2022 to April 2024. Through this project, we have consulted across the health and community service sector and emergency management to inform the development of a Second Implementation Plan (IP2) for the People at Risk in Emergencies Framework.

The IP2 was released in January 2023, and was developed to build on the work of the first Implementation Plan, which functioned as a work plan for the *People at Risk in Emergencies Action Group*. Featuring a new engagement structure which has more representation from the health and community sector, the IP2 features four cross cutting themes and five priority populations and covers the period from 2023-2025:

Cross Cutting Themes

1. Emergency preparedness, response, recovery and resilience
2. Information, education, communications and media
3. Service and program funding models
4. Housing and development

Priority Populations

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities
2. Children and young people
3. Culturally and linguistically diverse people/communities
4. People with disability, experiencing isolation or homebound by physical or mental health conditions
5. People experiencing homelessness

In May 2023, the mid-term report for the PaRE project was released. One of its key findings was that the level and breadth of engagement and collaboration at all stages of PaRE shows the project is being delivered in a way that is building relationships across the emergency management and health and community services sectors.





Solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

KEY ACTIVITIES

- » Public statement of support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart
- » Supporting the establishment of the South Australia Voice to Parliament

During the 2022 Federal Election campaign, the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, committed to progressing the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and enshrining the call for a Voice in the Constitution through a referendum. The referendum question and proposed amendment to the Constitution were announced on 23 March 2023.

Immediately following this, our Board and Policy Council considered expressing public support for the Uluru Statement and its call for Voice, Treaty and Truth-telling. At the same time we remain committed to ensuring our governments continue making real investments in the services and supports required to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples have access to what they need to live a decent life.

We released a public statement of support and began work on leveraging our relationships with the community sector to help create broad-based public awareness about the Uluru Statement, and generate a groundswell of public support needed to secure a successful referendum result. In doing so, our intention was also to open the space for truth-telling and to engage in more long-term and broader conversations about the role that SACOSS and our member organisations have played in maintaining the status quo and perpetuating the processes of colonisation, even if inadvertently.

Work began in June 2023 on producing a special fortnightly ebulletin - *Voice! Treaty! Truth!* - to highlight our support for the Uluru Statement and its three key tenets. It was also to provide resources and up-to-date information to our members about the Yes campaign and events being held around the State.

In that same month, we also started planning to co-host six Voice, Treaty, Truth forums across regional centres and in Adelaide, inviting expressions of interest from our member organisations to partner with us. We were very excited about securing the support of Melissa Clarke - a Ngarrindjeri, Kurna and Wirangu woman, and a delegate at the Constitutional Convention at Uluru and a signatory to the Uluru Statement - to facilitate these co-hosted forums, to be held during August to early October 2023.

Throughout 2022-23, we supported and welcomed the establishment of the South Australian Voice to Parliament. In particular, we highlighted how South Australia is tracking with meeting its commitments to Closing the Gap, most notably the targets to reduce the incarceration of Aboriginal people by 30% for young people and 15% for adults by 2031. Aligned with the Uluru Statement and the establishment of a South Australia Voice, we have campaigned about the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are disproportionately removed from their families and placed in out-of-home care, and have maintained our call for the minimum age of criminal responsibility to be raised from 10 to at least 14 years. We urge governments to implement the Uluru Statement in full and to listen to its powerful words: *"Our children are aliened from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future."*

Raising Our Voices to Address Poor Health

KEY ACTIVITIES

- » Following up on key asks from the 2022 SA election
- » Launching the People's Health Voice
- » Research on the impacts of rental housing on people's health

SACOSS' public health priorities across 2022-23 focused on increasing work on prevention and the underlying causes of poor health, particularly for those experiencing poverty, financial stress, housing insecurity or social exclusion. In particular, our work centred on:

- Following up on key asks from the 2022 SA election;
- The launch of the People's Health Voice; and
- Research (with Wellbeing SA) on the impacts of rental housing on people's health.

We also made formal submissions to the Review of *Health Care Act 2008*, the Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Health Services in SA, and the Late-Night Trading Code of Practice.

Election Asks

As a result of the work of the SA Public Health Consortium and its 2022 state election platform – *Ensuring a Healthier South Australia for Years to Come* – we have seen attention paid to a number of issues. For example, our call for a floor price for cheap alcohol led to a series of meetings with the Minister for Consumer and Business Services, and the establishment of an Alcohol Harms Reference Group led by the Commissioner for Consumer and Business Services and involving all our Public Health Consortium partners. Our shared work on other aspects of the election platform continues. We continue to emphasise the importance of increased funding for preventive health approaches and the development of policies that support education, employment, housing and workforce capacity, thereby contributing to preventing and reducing the burden of illness and supporting people to be healthy and well. We continue to lobby for the creation of healthier environments for children, particularly in relation to healthy diets and banning the advertising of junk food in locations that children

frequent. Similarly, we have been advocating strongly for banning gambling advertising.

People's Health Voice

Following on from the important work undertaken by the Health Consumers Alliance, the new Labor Government announced funding to establish a patient or consumer voice on health, now called the People's Health Voice. This was launched in March 2023 at SACOSS by Health Minister, the Hon. Chris Picton MP.

This initiative provides an important opportunity to ensure measures aimed at improving the safety and quality of healthcare systems and services are guided by lived experience, and focus on access and the provision of patient-centred care.

Since its launch, the PHV project has engaged in deep and broad conversations about health equity, and the quality, inclusivity and responsiveness of our health system. We have engaged with 9 community-based interest groups whose members have lived experience of barriers to health access and inclusion, as well as a range of individual stakeholders (a total of 84 participants). Our engagements have already mapped a range of current and emergent health equity concerns, and in 2023-24, our co-design group will begin the process of developing a proposed structure for the People's Health Voice that translates community participation into equitable and sustainable health outcomes that are embedded in health system decision-making.

Health and Rental Housing

Through SACOSS' partnership with Wellbeing SA and our shared interest in the impact of housing as a social determinant of health and a marker of social and health inequality, we undertook a short research study – *Health and Rental Housing: Opportunities for change through legislative and regulatory reform*. This study was conducted during the review of the *Residential Tenancies Act*, and provided an opportunity to leverage health equities by providing a compelling evidence-informed case for the link between health outcomes and housing adequacy. We analysed South Australian health data, interviewed low-income households and reviewed available literature. The evidence showed that SA renters have poorer health and use hospital emergency rooms more than home owners.



Equity and Affordability in Energy Services Provision

KEY ACTIVITIES

- » Continued focus on equity and affordability in provision of energy services
- » Engagement in numerous consultation, advocacy, and decision-making processes
- » Hosting the *Who pays? Who benefits? Who profits?* conference in June 2023

Energy is a key area of SACOSS research, policy work and advocacy. It is an essential service – none of us can opt out of purchasing it – yet energy prices in South Australia, already famously high, continued to rise over the past year. This, of course, disproportionately impacts people on low incomes who are the least able to insulate themselves against rising energy prices and already pay more for their energy. In 2022-23 we have continued to push for more equitable outcomes for low-income energy consumers.

We have continued to engage in multiple (and ongoing) consultation, advocacy, and decision-making processes at both the state and federal level. This has included contributing to SA Power Network (SAPN)'s Community Advisory Board and People's Panel; responding to the Australian Energy Regulator's issues paper and draft determination on the Default Market Offer Prices; providing input into Essential Services Commission of South

Australia (ESCOSA)'s inquiry into retail energy prices; and joining the national Efficient Electric Homes Collaboration. We have also continued to host the Essential Services Group and engaged in advocacy opportunities such as providing input to the South Australian government's Green Paper on our state's energy transition. Our submissions and work in these areas have focused on ensuring equity and affordability in the provision of energy services; issues that have often been lacking in many of the processes and consultations in which we've participated.

In May 2023 we also secured funding from Energy Consumers Australia to refresh the National Roundtable Network of Consumer Advocates on Energy, after a funding and COVID induced hiatus. This funding will be used to host multiple online meetings and information sessions in 2023-24, as well as facilitate in-person meetings in mainland capital cities for energy consumer advocates. Growing, diversifying and supporting a national network of energy consumer advocates is more important than ever at a time when we are in the midst of an energy transition alongside a cost of living crisis. We are committed to continuing to foster and represent consumer voices in this area.

Outside of our engagement with other organisations and government bodies, we have worked with Renew to develop a report on *Efficient heating and cooling in Adelaide homes*, which is informing our advocacy for better government support and funding for energy efficiency retrofits that prioritise low-income households. In particular, this work underpins our ongoing advocacy for minimum energy efficiency standards and mandatory disclosure in rental properties – particularly as our State is currently reviewing the *Residential Tenancies Act 1995*.

We have also sought to link energy affordability issues more clearly to structural problems in the energy system. Interrogating the structures that enable unequal access (and affordability) of these essential services continues to guide our work and advocacy. This approach was reflected in our June 2023 conference *Who Pays? Who benefits? Who profits?* (pictured speaking at the conference is SACOSS Senior Policy Officer Malwina Wyra).



Affordable, Safe and Reliable Water

KEY ACTIVITIES

- » Advocating for access to safe and affordable drinking water in remote and regional South Australia
- » Protecting and supporting South Australian water consumers on low incomes, renting or experiencing disadvantage
- » Engaging in RTA review to address water billing issues affecting South Australian renters

In 2022-23, SACOSS had four key areas of policy and advocacy focus within our water portfolio: remote water security; engaging in SA Water's Regulatory Determination process for the 2024-28 period; supporting the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) to administer the Consumer Advocacy and Research Fund (CARF); and engaging in the Review of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1995* (RTA) to address water billing issues affecting South Australian renters.

We have continued supporting organisations to advocate for access to safe and affordable drinking water in remote and regional South Australia by:

- working closely with the Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT) and DEW to host three Community Water Workshops to progress long-standing issues for the Umoona Community in Coober Pedy and the Yarlina Community around water management, water supply and debt,
- advocacy around a 'Basic Level of Service' for water security and reform of state-wide pricing and community service obligations.

Our collaborative work with the ALT, the Umoona Community, the District Council of Coober Pedy, the State Government, SA Water, and the SA Housing Authority resulted in key outcomes that included:

- a significant reduction in water debt for the Umoona Community, with writedowns from the Coober Pedy Council and contributions from the South Australian Government,
- a commitment from SA Water to relay a new water mains network within the Umoona Community,

- a commitment from the SA Housing Authority to work closely with SA Water to upgrade infrastructure from the new meters to the house/property as part of the relay project.

We continued our advocacy for systemic change in remote water supply, calling for the extension of DEW's self-supplied water security assessment project to include the remaining remote communities in the state, including those serviced by SA Water, the District Council of Coober Pedy and the District Council of Ceduna. We also called for the state government to immediately extend and apply Community Service Obligations (CSOs) to retail drinking water entities other than SA Water, such as the District Council of Coober Pedy and the District Council of Ceduna to address inequities in the state-wide pricing of water and commit to investigating the best ownership arrangements for the long-term interests of residents.

We presented on SACOSS' major 2021-22 research report - *Basic Level of Service: Settings for long-term water security in remote South Australia* - at the Voices for the Bush Conference in Alice Springs in August 2022, and were pleased to see the report featured as a case study in Water Services Association of Australia's "*Closing the Water Gap*" report.

We have continued our engagement and advocacy around the SA Water Regulatory Determination process for the 2024 - 28 period (RD24). As a monopoly provider of an essential service, SA Water is regulated by the Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA) to ensure the efficient delivery of retail services. Every four years, SA Water must submit a proposal to ESCOSA outlining the revenue required to deliver its services. ESCOSA then makes a regulatory determination setting the maximum revenue that SA Water can recover from its customers over the regulatory period, as well as the minimum service standards it must deliver for its customers.

Our advocacy throughout the RD24 process was focused on highlighting affordability considerations, and protecting and supporting South Australian water consumers on low incomes, renting or experiencing disadvantage. Through membership on SA Water's Peak Bodies Engagement Forum, SACOSS, in addition to other consumer and community organisations, has continually



highlighted the unfair exclusion of renters from essential consumer protection obligations, the growing cost of living pressures facing South Australian households and the need to ensure essential services are affordable, given the disproportionate impact on low-income households.

In 2022-23 SACOSS also progressed advocacy flowing from Uniting Communities' funded CARF project *Implementation of Revised Water Industry Act (2012) – tenants as water customers* as part of the RTA Review, calling for:

- the concurrent amendment of the RTA and the Water Industry Act 2012 to explicitly recognise tenants as a residential customer, enabling improved access to hardship supports and dispute resolution on water billing issues,
- the amendment of the RTA to address the default position in tenancy agreements on landlords' responsibility for water supply charges, landlords' obligations to provide copies of the water bill, and landlords' obligations for excess water charges resulting from leaks.

SACOSS co-hosted two SA Renters Submission Workshops with Better Renting and the Anti-Poverty Network to assist renters to draft their own submissions to the RTA Review, including on responses to issues on protections for tenants and water billing.

We will continue our strong advocacy for equitable access to affordable, safe and reliable water for all South Australians in 2023-24.

The Best Interests of Children

KEY ACTIVITIES

- » Numerous submissions to vital reviews and inquiries to ensure 'protection from harm' was interpreted as broadly as possible
- » Participation in the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care led by the Hon. Julia Gillard AC
- » Leading the collaborative work of the SA Raise the Age Coalition

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SACOSS has continued to speak out on a range of critical issues that affect children, young people and their families. We have emphasised a rights-based approach to responding to the best interests of children, and have highlighted the relevance of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, many aspects of which continue to be disregarded in South Australia and across the country. Similarly, we have highlighted the relevance of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its stated urgency about the mistreatment, removal and incarceration of First Nations children and young people, as well as the importance of the South Australian Voice in responding to these shameful features of our society.

Much of our work in 2022-23 highlighted that legislation designed to protect children and young people from harm requires attention, this includes the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*. Our concern is that 'protection from harm' is too narrowly interpreted in terms of safety, rather than addressing the effects of the range of harms that undermine good outcomes for children and families – such as poverty, homelessness, poor physical and mental health, inequitable education, criminalisation and incarceration, and disconnection from culture and community, amongst others.

This concern underpinned our submissions to the Department of Child Protection's Review of the Act, and the Inquiry led by the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People into the Application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) in the Removal and Placement of Aboriginal Children in South Australia.





Our contributions to other important children's interest work across 2022-23 included:

- Participation in the stakeholder roundtable discussions and the preparation of two submissions for the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), led by the Hon. Julia Gillard AC.
- Engaging in a process, led by researchers from the University of Adelaide and the BetterStart team in the School of Public Health, to develop a strategy aimed at improving outcomes for children, young people, families and communities across South Australia. This has resulted in *Thriving Families 2025-2045 – A Generational Vision*.
- Making a submission in June 2023 to the Australian Human Rights Commission, through the National Children's Commissioner, on Youth Justice and Child Wellbeing Reform Across Australia. It highlighted the intersection of poverty, discrimination, racism, and criminalisation, and drew attention to the prevalent criminogenic responses to children and young people with disability; the nature and role of the child protection system, and the cross-over with children caught up in the youth justice system; and the criminalisation of children, including those as young as ten.
- Leading the collaborative work of the SA Raise the Age Coalition, in conjunction with Change the Record and the National Raise the Age Campaign, to sustain focus on raising the age of criminal responsibility from ten to at least 14 years of age. This included handing over a petition with almost 12,000 signatures in August 2022 to the SA Attorney-General, and ongoing lobbying and campaigning at both a state and federal level.

SACOSS's Policy Council also met with Guardian for Children and Young People, Shona Reid, to hear about the current status of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) in South Australia. The Guardian highlighted that more than five years after discussions commenced in SA about implementing OPCAT, we have no enabling legislation and, as a nominated oversight body, they have still not been allocated the resources to undertake the preventive oversight role for detained children and young people as required by OPCAT.

SACOSS Submissions

One of SACOSS' core roles is to provide advice to government and other policy makers on issues that affect our sector or impact on people experiencing poverty and disadvantage. This is often done by making submissions in response to public consultations run by government or statutory authorities.

SACOSS also initiates submissions on issues of deep concern to our members and people experiencing hardship.

Submissions are often used as platforms for further advocacy. The submissions for 2022-23 are listed below.

SUBMISSIONS

July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Privatisation of Public Services in SA
August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to Review of Health Care Act 2008 • Joint submission to Australian Energy Market Commission Draft Determination protecting customers affected by family violence • Joint Councils of Social Service letter to Energy Ministers on the inclusion of social equity in the National Electricity Objectives • Joint Statement in support of lifting energy performance standards for new homes in the National Construction Code 2022 • Joint letter to Energy Ministers on the Energy Security Board's Capacity Mechanism
October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCOSA on small-scale energy networks consumer protection framework review: Draft Decision
November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Child Protection Review of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2027 • Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Health Services in SA
December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Tenancies Act 1995 Review • Australian Energy Regulator on the Default Market Officer Prices 2023-24 Issues Paper • ESCOSA on the Inquiry into Retail Energy Prices • Review of the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016
January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late Night Trading Code of Practice
February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EFC Committee Inquiry into Housing Availability Issues Paper • Australian Energy Market Commission on the Review of the Regulatory Framework for Metering Services Draft Report • National Energy Performance Strategy Consultation paper • Energy Security Board on the Data Services Consultation Submission • Australian Energy Regulator on the Review of Consumer Protections for Future Energy Services • Joint submission to the National Energy Performance Strategy Consultation Paper
March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCOSA on the Electricity Distribution Code Review Draft Decision • Inquiry by Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People into the Application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in the removal and placement of Aboriginal children in South Australia
April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AER on the Default Market Offer 2023-24 Draft Determination • AER on its preliminary position paper on the Framework an Approach for SAPN RD 2025-30
May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care • SA Parliament Select Committee on the Gig Economy • SA Parliament Economics and Finance Committee Inquiry into South Australian Housing Availability • Productivity Commission Review of Philanthropy

**SUBMISSIONS****June 2023**

- Verbal submission to AEMO on the Transmission Expansion Options Report
- [National Children's Commissioner on Youth Justice and Child Wellbeing Reform Across Australia](#)
- [Supplementary submission to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care \(Gillard RC\)](#)
- [Supplementary submission SA Parliament Economics and Finance Committee Inquiry into South Australian Housing Availability](#)
- [Department for Energy and Mining on Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act Draft Bill](#)
- [Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights – Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework](#)

Reports and Research

SACOSS undertakes research across the year in a range of areas of concern and interest for our sector and in line with our advocacy objectives and funding deliverables.

From this research we publish reports, briefings, fact sheets and other resources on issues affecting the community and social services sector, or which impact low income and disadvantaged people.

Reports usually arise from issues identified by the sector. In some cases, the research might be funded by government, while in other cases we have developed the research from our own resources. The reports and briefing notes for 2022–23 are listed below.

REPORTS, BRIEFINGS & RESOURCES**July 2022**

- [Annual Briefing to the Minister for Energy](#)
- [Renew Report into heating and cooling Adelaide Homes: an analysis of energy bills and emissions](#)
- [Annual Water Briefing to the Minister](#)
- [Basic level of service: settings for long-term water security in remote South Australia](#)

October 2022

- [Cost of Living Report #50 re Rental Affordability in Regional SA](#)
- [Cost of Living Report #51 Snapshot of CPI data for Sept quarter](#)

December 2022

- [Reforming electricity concessions to better meet need](#)

January 2023

- [Cost of Living Report #52 December Quarter 2022 – Adelaide Rental Affordability](#)
- [Snapshot of CPI data for December Quarter](#)
- [Briefing Note: Concessions Reform](#)
- [Briefing Note: Residential Tenancies Act Review](#)
- [Briefing Note on Public Housing and Labor's *A Better Public Future*](#)

February 2023

- Health and Rental Housing – Opportunities for change through legislative and regulatory reform. Report prepared for Wellbeing SA.

March 2023

- [Public statement of Support for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament](#)

April 2023

- [Cost of Living Report #53 March Quarter 2023 Snapshot of CPI data for March Quarter](#)
- [Briefing Note: Rental Affordability](#)
- [Briefing Note: A Better Public Housing Future](#)

June 2023

- [State Budget Analysis 2023-24](#)

Our Sector

Adequate Grant Indexation

SACOSS has always had a major role in ensuring better contracting arrangements are in place with significant effort being devoted to the development of the SA NFP funding rules and guidelines. This has resulted in the development of standard contracts and an agreement about the levels of grant indexation that would apply.

While there continues to be concerns about the degree to which all parts of government are working within these rules, one of the issues that was obvious over the last 12 months was that wages and service delivery costs were rising at a rate that eclipsed the current agreed grant indexation figure of 2.5%.

SACOSS joined the Australian Services Union and the Working Women's Centre together with a number of the other sector peak bodies and our members to lobby the government, explaining the issue and noting the difficulties this was likely to create for the sector. We were therefore very pleased to see the Treasurer's announcement in the Mid-Year Budget Review that provided for a supplementary 2.8% indexation payment in 2022-23. While in some instances this still does not cover real increases in wages and service delivery costs, this was a far healthier indexation base for the sector.

At the same time as we were working with the state government, we also joined ACOSS and others in actively lobbying the federal government to make provisions in its grant funding indexation arrangements. The federal government also agreed to supplement its indexation formula payments and we believe, after further negotiation, most parts of the community services portfolio should have received supplementary indexation payments.

Sustainable Funding

It is still obvious that the way in which government commissions work from the sector through tender often results in services having subpar funding, sometimes amplified by inadequate grant indexation. Getting agreement about fit-for-purpose base funding for the delivery of vital community services has been a longstanding issue. It has been further amplified by competitive tendering processes.

Several other COSSes, along with ACOSS nationally, have commissioned work on what might constitute a fair and sustainable funding base for the sector. We have been drawing on this locally to argue for a better way to ensure services – particularly vital ongoing social and community services – are commissioned realistically with proper base funding and appropriate indexation that enables them to deliver the required services across the life of their contracts. We will continue to push for greater clarity and agreement at both state and commonwealth levels.





Department of Treasury and Finance Industry Advisory Group

SACOSS has been participating in this high-level advisory group convened by the CEO of Treasury and Finance, drawn from across all industry areas from which the state government procures and commissions work. Its key focus has been reducing the complexity of doing work with government, reducing the administrative burden and enhancing commissioning arrangements. A key point of discussion in this period has focused on ensuring government procurement costing is based on lifetime factors including hidden costs that might arise by not investing sufficiently well in the first instance (e.g. energy efficiency and housing build quality, etc.)

NFP Community of Practice

SACOSS also co-chairs the Not-for-Profit Community of Practice with senior DTF officials. This group, which has representatives from social services, environment, philanthropy and arts sectors, has met with government counterparts regularly over the last 12 months with a specific focus on exposing and resolving some of the issues which impact directly on the not-for-profit sector in relation to contracting and procurement.

In 2023/24 the state government's guiding policy framework for its relationship with NFP's – PC 044 – is due for review. SACOSS and members of the Community of Practice will be actively involved in guiding how this review is framed and undertaken.

Gender Pay Gap Task Force

The new state government arrived in office with an ambition to address gender inequality and as one part of that, established a task force to generate strategies to assist in addressing the Gender Pay gap. SACOSS has actively contributed to the work of the task force acknowledging the gendered nature of the social and community services sector workforce. The task force (pictured above) is due to provide an initial report to the Minister for Women before the end of 2024 with a series of possible proposals aimed at addressing the continuing gender based gap in wages and superannuation across a lifetime of work.



Governance and Organisational Sustainability

SACOSS remains acutely aware of the challenges facing boards and the sector and this year collaborated with the Governance Institute of Australia to deliver accredited governance training for 18 people drawn from across our member organisations. In an effort to strengthen ties across member organisations in senior operations and corporate roles, we also hosted a couple of events focussed around cyber safety and superannuation. We also had some limited availability for people to undertake opportunities around media training.

and Family Focus SA, Community Centres SA, Multicultural Youth SA, SA Financial Counsellors Association, Volunteering SA & NT, Youth Affairs Council of SA are all funded under this program – a number of whom receive core funds that help us to fulfil our role as peak bodies.

The program is meant to be re-named the Advocacy and Impact Program to better reflect its intention, and a new agreed impact measurement framework was to be implemented. We are still waiting for confirmation this is proceeding. We would be hopeful of using this framework in any review of our core grant which is up for renewal at the end of the 2023-24 year.

DHS Sector Support and Advocacy Funding Guidelines

Together with the other peaks and service providers funded through this program, SACOSS has devoted extensive effort over the last 18 months to a co-design process aimed at the development of a new Social Impact Funding Framework for the program. Carers SA, Child

Sector Representation

SACOSS continues to be represented on a wide range of committees including the Essential Services Commission's Consumer Advisory Panel, the State Government's Gambling Advisory Council, the SA Dental Service's Consumer Advisory Panel, and the Courts Community Reference Group. The CEO's term on Energy Consumer Australia's Reference Committee was completed.





Our Networks

Civil Society Peaks Protect Protest

We have continued to build on our alliance with other key civil society peak bodies: the Conservation Council, the Arts Council, SA Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network and SA Unions. Nowhere was this to emerge more important than in May 2023 when the state government legislated to change to the Summary Offences Act without any consultation.

While there is other legislation which governs protest activity, this Summary Offences Act legislation sets out activities, including those activities often related to civil disobedience and protest, that are considered offences and the penalties attached. No civil society groups were invited to provide any considered commentary about these changes, and so we were all alarmed when we saw both the massive increases in fines and the changes to wording expanding the reach of offences (for activities).

Needless to say, what ensued was a period of intense work over approximately two weeks which brought together our local civil society groups in SA Unions and the broader union movement, Conservation SA and the wider environment movement, and a number of other concerned bodies including the Law Society, the SA Bar Association, Rights Resource Network SA, Working Women's Centre SA, Amnesty International Australia, the Arts Council, and so on. We were also joined on the ground by colleagues from national organisations such as the Human Rights Law Centre and the Australian Democracy Network who shared our concerns and saw this as a continuation of legislative amendments that had been sweeping across states which threatened our rights to protest and undertake civil action.

In practice, the legislation was tabled and passed through the Lower House in just 22 minutes. Not a single Parliamentarian raised the possibility that there might be significant and unanticipated implications. There was a very small window to try to ensure the bill was more properly considered in the Legislative Council.

Our coalition prepared detailed briefings, wrote to both government and opposition members, met with the Premier, government and opposition members and the Shadow Attorney General, met a number of times with members of the cross bench, prepared an advertising campaign with radio and newspaper advertisements, supported a student-led #ProtectProtest rally, liaised with environmental groups that had been targeted, prepared our own #ProtectProtest rally (pictured above) to coincide with Labor caucus meeting the morning of the bill entering the Legislative Council, undertook numerous media interviews, and variously sat in Parliament or monitored events overnight from home, as Family First and Greens MLCs led a filibuster and then attempted to amend the legislation.

In the end – despite all of our efforts and a minor amendment to wording around the offence (which will now need to be tested in the courts and potentially the High Court) – we were not able to persuade the government from moving urgently to stop the legislation from being passed. Nor could we persuade the opposition to stand against it.

It was, however, a remarkable effort which saw quite diverse community groups come together and then work almost seamlessly to try and convince the parliament to change course. If nothing else, we were able to remind both the government and the opposition that there is a coalition of interest groups, led by civil society peak bodies, who monitor and will continue to speak out about the issues that matter.



The Need for a Human Rights Act

This work in relation to protest took place in the context of our continued push for an inquiry into the need for a Human Rights Act in South Australia. Working closely with the Rights Resource Network of SA, Law Society, and Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, the manner in which the changes to Summary Offences Act proceeded demonstrated yet again why Human Rights Act might be so important.

SACOSS published its own *Human Rights Legislation Policy* in March and actively encouraged all our members and other stakeholders to join the campaign for such an instrument. We appreciate the energy and work of Kym Davey, who as a member Policy Council, has contributed to campaigning on our behalf in promoting the need for an Act.

Welfare Rights Coalition

SACOSS continues to support the Welfare Rights Coalition in its concerns about the vulnerability of many people who are currently engaged in disputes with key elements of our welfare system (e.g. NDIS, Centrelink, My Aged Care), and particularly in their interactions with the institutions that were established to review and ensure citizens had access to due and proper process (e.g. AAT, SACAT).

There are very few mechanisms outside of formal legal processes that are available to provide guidance, support and advocacy which might assist these people in these circumstances to access review mechanisms with greater confidence. SACOSS joins the Coalition in identifying a glaring hole when it comes to access to, and the availability of, informed advocacy support that would precede any formal legal processes. As a result, many people may find themselves ill-informed in proceedings in these tribunal forums and thus do not have their rights and best interests protected.

SACOSS has supported the Coalition in seeking funding from both state and federal ministers to scope and develop such a service, utilising the network of volunteers that are connected with the work of the Coalition in the first instance. To date funding has not been forthcoming.

Anti-Poverty Network of SA

SACOSS values highly the presence of the Anti-Poverty Network SA and recognises the importance of having people who can speak directly to the experience of poverty and disadvantage as informants, advisors and spokespeople. We have collaborated on a number of campaigns including work on housing and rental affordability, digital inclusion, energy affordability, concessions and income support.



COSS Network

This year CEOs from across the COSS network met face to face again with meetings in Perth and Adelaide. The value of this network cannot be underestimated and, in an effort to strengthen collaboration across the COSSes, the South Australian meeting also included a joint meeting with Policy Leads from each of the COSSes (pictured above). This provided an opportunity to build insights into the work going on across jurisdictions, much of which was consistent and might be able to be drawn on. This includes work on issues such as raising the age of criminal responsibility, rental and housing affordability, energy efficiency, climate change, community resilience and disaster recovery.

We were delighted that at our Perth meeting Professor Megan Davis – one of the key Uluru Statement leaders – joined us to brief us on progress towards a national Voice, while in Adelaide the Commissioner for the First Nations Voice, Dale Agius, was able to join us to discuss progress towards SA's own Voice to Parliament.

These forums also remain a very helpful place for working with ACOSS on issues that extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries and need intervention

from the federal government. Work on raising the rate of basic income support payments has remained fundamental and we commend ACOSS for its tireless work in making the case for reform.

This year the federal government established its own Economic Advisory Committee which ACOSS joined. The Committee's role is to provide independent advice to government before every federal budget on economic inclusion and tackling disadvantage. It made a series of recommendations including one which argued for the need to raise JobSeeker from 70% of the pension up to 90%.

Regrettably this didn't happen but the 2023-24 federal budget will result in an increase to JobSeeker payments of about \$4 per day. This remains completely inadequate and we will be maintaining our commentary about its inadequacy – especially in a context where inflation has had such a dramatic impact on the cost of basics and essentials.

SACOSS Events

Alternative Futures: Ending Poverty Conference

The *Alternative Futures: Ending Poverty* conference in November 2022 brought together people with direct experiences of poverty, leaders and frontline workers from the social services sector, government (including Premier Peter Malinauskas) and beyond to imagine and plan for an alternative future: a future without poverty. The program consisted of a range of panel discussions on topics including housing affordability, digital inclusion, privatisation, government support and the Uluru Statement from the Heart (as well as cartoons such as the one below drawn by SACOSS life member Simon Kneebone). The conference was well attended and was supported by Anglicare SA, Beyond Bank, Centacare Catholic Country, Centacare Catholic Family Services, Department of Human Services, Flinders University, HESTA, InfoXchange, Pali GRC, Telstra, The Broadley Trust, The Wyatt Trust and Uniting Country SA.



Essential Services: Who pays? Who profits? Who benefits? Conference

The *Essential Services: Who pays? Who profits? Who benefits?* Conference in June 2023 focused on the essential household services of energy, water and telecommunications. The conference program brought together industry experts (including Miriam Lyons from the Sunrise Project pictured above) from across the nation to ask and discuss some of the tough questions including: Are the current systems fair? Could there be a better, more equitable way to fund essential services? Can we rely on benevolent billionaires and private corporations to finance the energy transition? Who will be paying poverty premiums for not being able to afford to benefit from solar PV, battery storage, and electric vehicles? Who bears the risks and consequences of underinvestment in these services?

The conference was generously supported by event partner Uniting Country SA, along with Anglicare, Centacare Catholic Country SA, ElectraNet, ESCOSA, Local Government Association of SA, SA Water, the Wyatt Trust, and Uniting SA.





State Budget Events

The 2022/23 State Budget was a crucial budget for the South Australian government, taking it through to the halfway point of its current term. SACOSS hosted a lunch with Treasurer the Hon. Stephen Mulligan MP pictured below the week after the state budget was handed down, which provided the attendees an opportunity to not only hear directly from the Treasurer, but also from a panel of sector experts on their thoughts on how the budget will impact the people that our sector supports.

Along with the post-budget lunch, we also held a post-budget briefing on the night of the state budget to provide an rapid, top-level overview of its impact on our sector, and a pre-budget information session to educate members on how to read and analyse budget papers.

Leadership Events

We continued to hold events that bring together key leaders from our member organisations, including a range of informal networking sessions and roundtable events.

Our networking drinks allow leaders within the sector to come together and discuss matters that are impacting their organisations. On occasions we were lucky to have the company of some government Ministers in attendance, including the Hon. Nat Cook MP, Minister for Human Services and the Hon. Stephen Mullighan MP, State Treasurer.

Our roundtable events provided a more formal setting for specific sector-related issues to be discussed among both sector leaders and government. Roundtables held included: *'The Protective Power of Job Security'*, held in partnership with Working Womens Centre SA; the second Civil Society Forum with the Premier and other senior state government Ministers, held in partnership with the Arts Industry Council of SA, Conservation Council, South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network and Unions SA; and co-hosting an SA community sector event with federal senator Karen Grogan to feed into the national Jobs and Skills Summit.

Capacity Building Events

As the peak body for the SA community services sector, we like to provide opportunities for knowledge growth for not only our members, but all staff working in the sector. Training sessions this year included a superannuation update (held in partnership with HESTA), Cyber Security and NFP Governance training.

Annual Thank You Breakfast

Our annual Thank you breakfast is an opportunity for the SACOSS Board team to show our appreciation to our members, along with members of parliament, government departments and other the wider community services sector. The breakfast was well attended and allowed for a much needed catch-up for many.



SACOSS Board Members 2022–23

The SACOSS Board is responsible for the governance of the organisation. SACOSS sincerely thanks all Board members for their commitment and service to the organisation in 2022-23.

BOARD MEMBERS 2022-23		
POSITION	NAME	YEAR TERM EXPIRES (NOVEMBER)
Chair	David Panter	2024
Treasurer	Emma Crosby	2023
Member	Nicole Chaplin	2023
Member	Dr Jen Cleary	2024
Member	Rohan Feegrade	2024
Member	Nancy Penna	2024
Member	Pam Simmons	2023
Member	Robyn Sutherland	2022
Member (co-opted)	Cheryl Axelby	2023
Member (co-opted)	Sabina Schaare	2023

Life Members

Over SACOSS’ 75-year history, many people have made significant contributions to our organisation and our objectives. Those who have made particularly outstanding and notable contributions have been awarded life membership:

Phillip Beddall	F Joy MacLennan
Grethe Brown	Wendy Malycha
Harvey Brown	Margaret Hunter (McKenzie)
Brian Butler	Mark Mitchell
Ed Carson	Kenneth F Newman
Edith Casely OBE	Joy Noble AM
Kym Davey	Anthea Pavy
Michael Dawson	Louise Portway
Marion Disney MBE	Lange Powell
Marj Ellis	Ruth Prescott
Colleen Fitzpatrick	Judith Roberts AO
Gael Fraser	Simon Schrapel AM
Barbara Garrett MBE OAM	Pam Simmons
Leigh Garrett	Mary Smith
Daphne Gum MBE OAM	Anne Stanton OAM
Peter Hall	Brian Ward
Sheila Hall AM	Mark Waters
Christine Halsey	Amy Wheaton
Mark Henley	Andrew B C Wilson AM
Elizabeth Hutchison	Michael Wooley
Simon Kneebone	Ian Yates AM



SACOSS Policy Council Members 2022–23

The SACOSS Policy Council helps to plan and develop key areas of social policy development work. SACOSS thanks the members of Policy Council for a successful 12 months across the 2022-23 financial year - we always value your collective insights and wisdom into enhancing social policy in South Australia.

POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERS 2022-23		
CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	PERSON ELECTED	ORGANISATION
Chairperson	David Panter	SACOSS Board/Minda
Peak Body	Oliver Carlton	Community Centres SA
	Geoff Harris	Mental Health Coalition of SA
	Melissa Gibson	Child and Family Focus SA (from Feb 2022)
	Michael White	SA Network of Drug and Alcohol Services
	Kristin Johansson	Multicultural Communities Council of SA
	Kate French	Community Housing Council SA
	Michele Robinson	Aboriginal Health Council SA
	Hamilton Calder	Volunteering SA/NT
	Jenifer Kingwell	Embolden
	Craig Bradbrook	PlaygroupSA
Non-metro	Shane Maddocks	ac.care
	Harry Randhawa	Uniting Country SA
Large NGO	Susan Errington	Legal Services Commission of SA
	Tania Manser	Sonder
	Leigh Garrett	OARS
	Simone Mather	Life Without Barriers
Small NGO	Fiona Endacott	Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA
	Nicole Chaplin	St John's Youth Service
	Nikki Candy	Working Women's Centre SA
	Kayla Dickeson	Disability Rights Advocacy Service
CALD	Deb Stringer	Australian Refugee Association
	Casual Vacancy	
Aboriginal	Casual Vacancy (x2)	
Individual Member	Kym Davey	
	Michele Wachla	
	Karen Smith	
	Jala Burton	

Policy Council Meetings & Regional Roundtables

Ten Policy Council meetings were held in 2022-23. One meeting was held online and invited additional representatives from regional SA to join us to discuss the way forward to SACOSS' work on regional issues. Another of the meetings was a joint meeting with the Board.

Key work of Policy Council featured as standing agenda items included: Implementing the Uluru Statement from the Heart, human rights and updates on the work of ACOSS.

Meetings in early 2023 had a focus on setting the policy priorities for the year. Workforce issues, Security of funding/resources for the sector, housing and regional issues featured in the priorities.

Kathy Mickan, a member of the secretariat, also conducted a listening tour in regional SA to ensure we were keeping in touch with the issues most important to regional South Australians in the face of the rising cost of living.

Our Member Organisations 2022–23

Aboriginal Community Care (SA)
 Aboriginal Health Council of SA
 Anglican Community Care
 Anglicare SA
 Australian Association of Social Workers
 Australian Health Promotion Association SA
 Australian Migrant Resource Centre
 Australian Red Cross (SA Division)
 Australian Refugee Association Inc.
 Australian Services Union
 Baptist Care SA
 Barkuma Inc
 Better Renting Limited
 Carers SA Inc.
 CareWorks
 CCI Services Ltd*
 Centacare Catholic Country SA Ltd
 Centacare Catholic Family Services
 Child and Family Focus SA
 City of Onkaparinga
 Community Centres SA Inc
 Community Housing Council of SA Inc
 Community Justice Services SA Ltd
 Community Living Australia
 Community Living Project Inc
 Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA
 Council On The Ageing SA
 CREATE Foundation
 Disability Rights Advocacy Service
 ECH Inc
 Embolden SA Inc
 Enhanced Lifestyles
 Family Drug Support
 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
 Guide Dogs SA/NT
 Hepatitis SA Inc
 Hesta Super Fund*
 Hutt Street Centre Ltd
 Julia Farr Association
 Junction Australia Ltd
 Justice for Refugees SA
 JusticeNet SA
 Justice Reform Initiative*
 Kornar Winmil Yunti
 Legal Services Commission of SA
 LELAN - Lived Experience Leadership & Advocacy
 Network
 Life Without Barriers
 Louisa DaCosta Trust
 Lutheran Community Care
 MarionLIFE Community Services
 Mental Health Coalition of SA
 MINDA Incorporated
 Mission Australia - SA Region
 MoneyMob Talkabout
 Neami National
 Non Profit Training*
 OARS Community Transitions
 Occupational Therapy Australia
 Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People
 Playgroup Association of SA Inc

Reconciliation SA Pty Ltd
 Relationships Australia South Australia Ltd
 Save the Children Australia
 Second Chances SA
 SIN
 Skylight Mental Health
 Sonder
 South Australian Financial Counsellors Association Inc
 South Australian Network of Drug and Alcohol Services
 St John's Youth Services Inc
 St Vincent de Paul Society (SA) Inc
 STTARS - Survivors of Torture & Trauma
 SYC Ltd
 Terandi*
 The Broughton Art Society Inc.
 The Salvation Army
 The Smith Family
 The Wyatt Trust
 Uniting Communities
 Uniting Country SA Ltd
 UnitingCare SA
 UnitingCare Wesley Bowden
 UnitingSA
 Volunteering SA&NT
 Westside Housing
 Women's Safety Services
 Working Women's Centre SA Inc
 YourPlace Housing Ltd

*Associate Members



Secretariat 2022–23

Ross Womersley
Chief Executive Officer

Policy & Research

Dr Catherine Earl
*Director of Policy and Advocacy
(to August 2022)*

Dr Rebecca Tooher
*Director of Policy and Advocacy
(from October 2022)*

Dr Greg Ogle
*Senior Policy and Research Analyst -
Economic Issues*

Rebecca Law
Senior Policy Officer - Water

Malwina Wyra
*Senior Policy Officer
(from November 2022)*

Georgina Morris
Senior Policy Officer - Energy and Water

Sue Tilley
*Senior Policy Officer - Health, Aboriginal Social
Justice, Child and Family Wellbeing*

Kathy Mickan
Senior Policy Officer - Disaster Resilience

Dr Katherine Hodgetts
*Senior Project Officer - People's Health Voice
(from February 2023)*

Dr Shawna Marks
*Policy Officer
(to October 2022)*

Pas Forgione
*Project Officer - Digital Inclusion
(from December 2022)*

Communications

Eva O'Driscoll
*Communications Manager
(to December 2022)*

Ben Osborne
*Communications Manager
(from March 2023)*

Trevor Byrne
Digital Communications and Engagement Officer

Events & Membership

Amy Swinburne
*Membership and Stakeholder Engagement
Coordinator*

Finance & Administration

Erin Kingisepp
Corporate Services Manager

Lucy Goodall
Finance and Administration Assistant

Thank you to the members of the SACOSS secretariat team (pictured above in June 2023) for your hard work, passion and commitment towards advancing social policy and advocacy across 2022-23.

We wish Catherine Earl, Eva O'Driscoll and Shawna Marks all the best as they began new roles outside SACOSS in 2022-23, and thank them for their efforts over many years.

In 2022-23, we welcomed Malwina Wyra, Pas Forgione, Katherine Hodgetts and Ben Osborne, and look forward to their contributions.

External committees

Representatives and nominees of SACOSS sat on the following boards and committees in 2022-23. We thank them for their time and commitment.

David Panter

- ACOSS Board member

Ross Womersley

- Energy Charter End User Consultative Group
- Energy Consumers Australia Reference Group
- Essential Services Commission of SA Consumer Advisory Committee
- NDIS Key Influencers & Peak Industry Groups Stakeholder Forum
- Gambling Advisory Council
- Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) NFP Community of Practice Committee
- DTF Industry Advisory Group
- Centre for Health in All Policies Research Translation Committee
- Adult Safeguarding Advisory Group
- SA Government Concessions Review Reference Group

Catherine Earl / Rebecca Tooher

- Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity PhD Advisory Group
- Resilience Recovery and Engagement Committee
- DHS/WBSA Secure Food Systems Project Advisory Group

Greg Ogle

- Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) Consumer Consultative Forum (6 months – shared with Georgina Morris)
- SA Government Concessions Review Steering Committee
- University of Melbourne Community Tax Project

Rebecca Law

- Australian Gas Infrastructure Group SA Reference Group
- SA Water Residential Customer Advisory Group
- SA Water Peak Bodies Engagement Forum

Georgina Morris

- SA Power Networks Community Advisory Board
- SA Power Networks Community Reference Group
- SA Power Networks Community Advisory Board Resets Sub-Group
- ElectraNet Consumer Advisory Panel
- Australian Gas Networks Priority Services Program Advisory Group
- ACMA Consumer Consultative Forum (6 months – shared with Greg Ogle)

Sue Tilley

- SA Public Health Consortium
- Alcohol Harms Reference Group (Consumer and Business Services)
- SA Raise the Age Coalition
- National Raise the Age Campaign Coalition
- Thriving Families Generational Strategy 2025-2045 Consultation Group

Malwina Wyra

- Efficient Electric Homes Collaboration
- Healthy Homes for Renters Executive Committee

Dr Susan Errington

- Courts Community Reference Committee

Colleen Fitzpatrick

- Dame Roma Mitchell Trust Funds Board

Robyn Sutherland

- SA Dental Service Consumer Advisory Panel

Kym Davey

- Human Rights Act Campaign Group

Treasurer's Report

2022-23 was a more successful year financially for SACOSS, resulting in an operating surplus of \$76,881 (before the fair value movement of \$57,721 of the ethical investment portfolio resulting in an overall surplus of \$134,602 for the year) compared to the operating loss of \$56,920 of 2021-22. An additional \$215,568 of revenue compared to the previous financial year contributed to the positive financial outcome.

The increase in revenue is attributable to our conference and sponsorship income, a slight increase in membership income, along with an increase in grants (specifically DHS, SA Energy Consumer Advocacy, Consumer Advocacy and Research and other).

We held two successful conferences during the year, one focusing on ending poverty, and the other on essential services. Both conferences were well attended, with positive feedback from attendees. Membership fees and hire fees from the use of the Marjorie Black Community Room remained steady and continue to play a part in supporting SACOSS' work.

Additional funding was received for a number of new projects enabling SACOSS to continue to make an impact on key initiatives. We were pleased to obtain funding to work on digital inclusion with a focus on regional impacts. We also started work on the People's Health Voice project with funding from the Department of Health and Wellbeing. Finally, Wellbeing SA funding enabled us to compile a report on health and rental housing, which we were able to fulfil with internal resources.

In 2022-23 our staffing numbers increased to fifteen (most part-time), reflecting the commitment of the organisation to fulfil our grant obligations and commitments to our members and those we are advocating on behalf of whilst providing a healthy, safe, conducive environment for our people. We are pleased to have this extra capacity on board, along with a new Director of Policy and Advocacy and a new Communications Manager, bringing with them a fresh perspective and enthusiasm to the existing team.

Our operating expenses had increased slightly by \$81,767 from 2021-22 which is attributable to an increase in conference costs, consultancy fees and travel, accommodation costs and insurance.

Conference and event expenses have increased compared to last year which was expected given the two conferences held this year and only one in the prior year.

Similarly, consultancy fees were also increased as a result of our partnership with Red Cross on the Disaster Risk Reduction project.

Travel and accommodation expenses increased as we emerged from the Covid 19 restrictions, and we expect this to continue in the 2023-24 financial year as the Energy Roundtable resumes.

Insurance premiums also experienced a large jump in costs for the year. This is attributable to the increase in cyber insurance costs and overall premium increases seen across the board.

Many of the other expenses were in line with expectations and of a similar amount to last year.

SACOSS continues to maintain a small investment portfolio and term deposit holding, and as such benefited from the market recovery and the increase in interest rates. Distributions received on the investments fell short in comparison to last year but this was more than offset by increased interest income.

We were once again pleased to receive an unqualified audit report from our auditors Nexia Edwards Marshall, and a full copy of our Annual Financial Statement, which includes the Independent Auditor's Report to the members, can be accessed on our website for a more comprehensive overview of our financial performance and position.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the SACOSS staff. Their commitment, time and effort to the organisation is fantastic and highly appreciated. My thanks also extend to the other members of our Finance, Audit and Investment & Risk Committee who volunteer their time and expertise, along with our Board. Naturally our work would not be possible without a range of funders and members – all of whom share our purpose to secure justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians.

Yours in finance
Emma Crosby



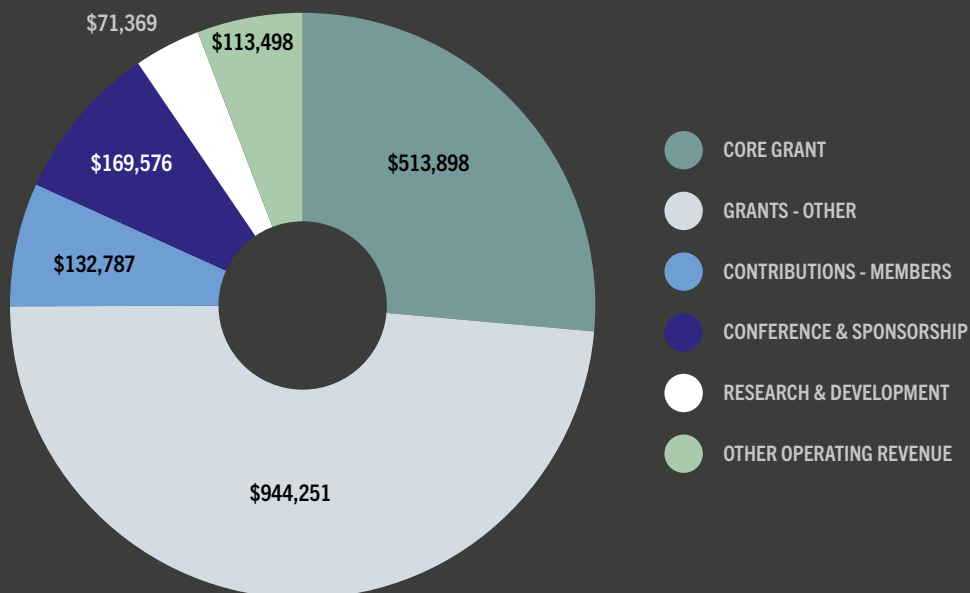
Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2023

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE INC.

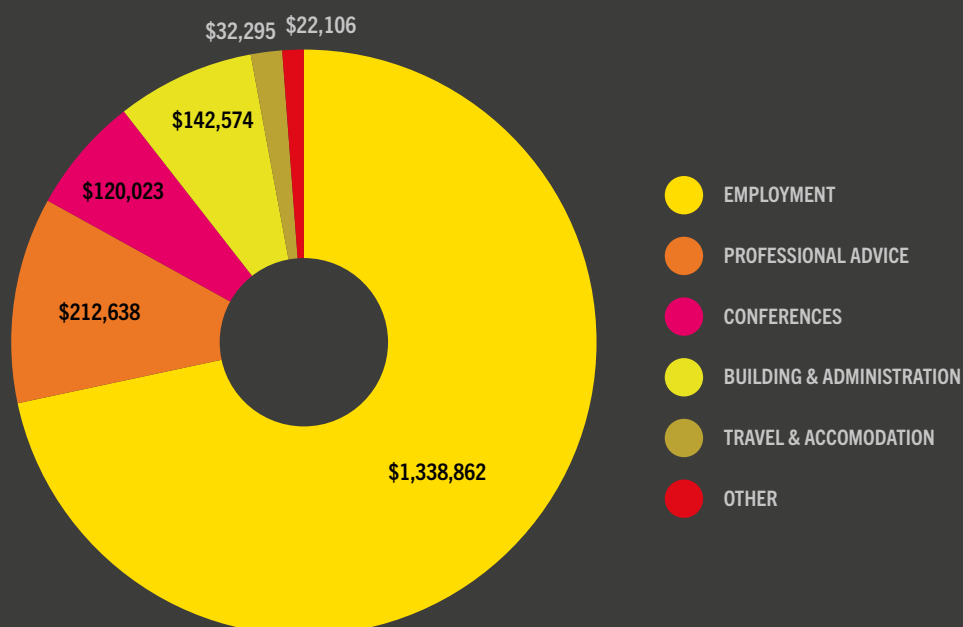
	2023 \$	2022 \$
REVENUE		
Core Grant	513,898	488,961
Grants - Other	944,251	914,927
Contributions - Members	132,787	110,594
Conference and Sponsorship	169,576	107,098
Research and Development	71,369	70,196
Other Operating Revenue	113,498	38,035
Total Revenue	1,945,379	1,729,811
EXPENSES		
Conference Cost	120,023	62,342
Consultancy Fees	168,141	127,329
Depreciation	53,190	38,018
Employee Benefits Expenses	1,338,862	1,402,290
Office Accommodation	33,328	34,329
Computers and IT	15,358	13,989
Printing, Postage and Stationery	10,199	8,605
Insurance	26,351	17,446
Professional Services	44,497	49,914
Reference Materials	682	629
Travel and Accommodation	32,295	9,341
Equipment	3,466	4,401
Other Expenses	22,106	18,098
Total Expenses	1,868,498	1,786,731
Net Current Year Surplus/(Deficit) before fair value movement	76,881	(56,920)
OTHER INCOME		
Gain/(Loss) on Revaluation of Financial Assets	57,721	(78,614)
Gain/(Loss) on Revaluation of Property	-	1,602,000
Total Comprehensive Income (Loss) for the year	134,602	1,466,466

The SACOSS 2023 Audited Financial Report with accompanying notes is available on our website.

INCOME TOTAL
for 2022-23
\$1,945,379



EXPENSE TOTAL
for 2022-23
\$1,868,498



Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2023

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE INC.

	2023 \$	2022 \$
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Cash Assets	1,059,959	548,205
Trade and Other Receivables	38,116	106,002
Prepayments	21,999	4,464
Total Current Assets	1,120,074	658,671
Non-Current Assets		
Financial Assets	470,413	412,692
Property, Plant and Equipment	3,251,166	3,300,618
Total Non Current Assets	3,721,579	3,713,310
Total Assets	4,841,653	4,371,981
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Trade and Other Payables	180,785	127,165
Contract Liabilities	425,584	147,093
Employee Provisions	161,038	168,033
Total Current Liabilities	767,407	442,291
Non-Current Liabilities		
Employee Provisions	21,825	11,871
Total Non-Current Liabilities	21,825	11,871
Total Liabilities	789,232	454,162
Net Assets	4,052,421	3,917,819
Equity		
Reserves	3,228,211	3,228,211
Retained Surplus	824,210	689,608
Total Equity	4,052,421	3,917,819

The SACOSS 2023 Audited Financial Report with accompanying notes is available on our website.

Our Funding Partners

SACOSS gratefully acknowledges the support of the following organisations through grant and activity funding:

PEAK FUNDING



ADVOCACY AND PROJECTS



mannifera

OTHER SUPPORT

We thank our member organisations for their continued support, including those who provided additional financial support to help us further advance our advocacy. We also thank the organisations that sponsored our conferences and other events throughout 2022-23: Anglicare SA, Centacare Catholic Country SA, Centacare Catholic Family Services, Parli GRC, Telstra, Uniting Country SA, Infoxchange, HESTA, Flinders University, Beyond Bank, Department of Human Services, The Broadley Trust, Essential Services Commission of SA, SA Water, UnitingSA, ElectraNet, Local Government Association of SA, RAA and SA Power Networks.



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