



SACOSS

75TH ANNUAL REPORT

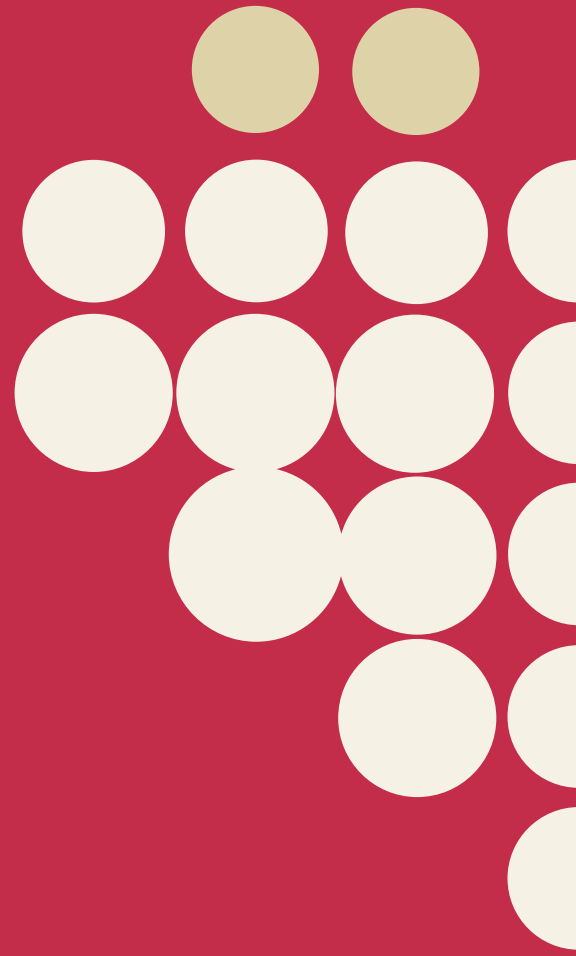
South Australian Council of Social Service
Advocating for a Just SA

2021–22

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■ OUR PURPOSE

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



75 years fighting for fairness

As you will have no doubt noticed this is our – well not ours but SACOSS’ - 75th Annual Report. And what a proud history in leading the fight against poverty and disadvantage sits amongst the work of those 75 years. Originally born out of growing concern for the “children of nobody”, community leaders in 1943/1944 established the Youth Welfare Coordinating Council (YWCC) and by 1946, modelled loosely on the British Council of Social Service, a resolution was carried which saw the YWCC incorporated “into a wider body representing interests concerned with the social welfare of the community as a whole” – being the SA Council of Social Services.

Critics accused the Council of snobbishness in choosing many of its office bearers from the upper echelons of Adelaide society, but as historian Michael Page notes, “In fact it made sense. People of influence could open many doors for an organisation still finding its feet and with barely enough money for running costs”.

At that time there were SACOSS standing committees for youth, churches, rehabilitation, marriage guidance, films, and the publication of a regular bulletin, and groups were being planned to deal with the problems of war neurosis, immigration, discharged prisoners and the welfare of mental patients.

Now, across this Annual Report you’ll find references to items drawn from the historical record, and you might be forgiven for imagining that the world hasn’t changed much – the social issues that brought those community leaders together in the 40s are echoed in the social issues we continue to face today. Our concerns for *not just the children but equally the adults of nobody* remain as central to our purpose as it was 75 years ago.

As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, which more often than not had the impact of heightening the vulnerability of people who were already experiencing poverty, inequality and injustice, we now face the very real possibility of recession.

Importantly, despite an atmospheric change in openness and dialogue from newly-elected governments at both state and federal levels, their capacity to invest in action that genuinely addresses some long-standing social policy gaps, is actively undermined by promises not to introduce/increase taxes.

SACOSS has long argued that our governments need a reliable and adequate tax base, repeatedly noting that without taxes vital services simply disappear – especially social and community services! It remains right and proper that those of us who have the capacity pay our fair share, recognising that paying taxes allows our governments to invest in the things that are good for us individually and collectively as a community.

In the lead-up to this year’s state election, the SACOSS Board took time to think carefully about both our Strategic Plan and the critical issues we felt needed to be taken up by whoever formed the next government. One of the key issues to emerge was the idea that we urgently needed to do more work on changing the narrative about poverty.

Over the past few decades we have seen a huge increase in rhetoric that leaves poverty blamed on the person experiencing it rather than on the many systemic issues that result in people being in those circumstances. Acknowledgement of the power of inequality has been suppressed, and dialogue about the deserving and undeserving poor has proliferated.

On the back of events like the 2001 “Tampa affair” and the characterisation of desperate refugees as invading boat people, discrimination and racism across Australia has seemingly been emboldened. Despite national referendums supporting marriage equality, members of the LGBTIQA+ community experience continuing discrimination. People living with disability are still not being welcomed and included. Far too often, care for our elders is of a completely inadequate standard. One in six children in Australia are living in poverty. And women commonly don’t have the incomes nor the standing of men. Community attitudes to people in need of support have become much harsher. And – as Robodebt has demonstrated for people who need financial assistance to cover the basics because they have been unable to find work – our systems are much more punitive.

Like many of the community leaders who were present for the birth of SACOSS, our Board of today all felt this pervasive problematic narrative could not be ignored, and that we must all work to change this narrative. It must be a strategic priority for our work over the next few years and, in doing so, it remains imperative that we continue to amplify the voices of those people who have a direct experience of poverty and disadvantage.

A similar imperative surrounds the call made by First Nations leaders from across Australia in shaping the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Several centuries on from white people’s arrival, the impacts of colonisation are writ large in the lives of Aboriginal people. The Statement from the Heart is a gift – an invitation for us all to join in supporting a First Nations Voice to Parliament, to engage in telling the truth about our colonial past, and to work to treaty and Makarrata – a complex Yolngu word describing a process of conflict resolution, peacemaking and justice-seeking.

Much of our sector’s work across time is embedded in colonial practice, and we have a real opportunity to bring this out from the shadows and to listen and understand what this has meant for our

relationships with First Nations people. Moreover, we can learn how we must shape our work and partnerships into the future.

There is no doubt in our minds that if we can engage in this process honestly and earnestly, as individuals, as a sector, and as a community, we can definitely shape a different future – a future that shifts the narrative and also has the possibility of shifting the burden of poverty that has sat far too disproportionately on the shoulders of many First Nations/Aboriginal people.

And if we can do this, then we are just as likely to hit on the recipe to shift poverty, inequality and injustice in all its forms.



With our enormous thanks for the outstanding work of our secretariat team this year, our fellow Board members, and the members of our Policy Council, who all continue to devote time to supporting and guiding our work. We particularly want to thank Robyn Sutherland, who has stepped down from the Board after 2 years of fantastic contributions, and Dr Catherine Earl, who after 12 years in key SACOSS policy roles has moved on to a new role, with our very best wishes.

As importantly, if you look at the inside front and back covers of this year’s Annual Report, you’ll see some special names. These are the names of office bearers – past chairs, presidents, secretaries, executive directors, and CEOs of SACOSS’ 75 years.

These leaders all made major contributions that we honour. And they are also just the tip of the iceberg. Were we to name all the amazing people who helped in our work across these past decades, the report would be more than full of them alone. So thank you to all who have joined and served SACOSS as we have sought fairness, and in the hope there are many more yet to come.

With our thanks and in solidarity,

Ross Womersley
SACOSS CEO

David Panter
SACOSS Chair



EVENTS

2 CONFERENCES

4 COVER THE BASICS EVENTS

2 TREASURER'S BREAKFASTS

16 MEMBER NETWORKING & CAPACITY BUILDING EVENTS

2 REGIONAL ROUNDTABLES

1 NATIONAL ENERGY ROUNDTABLE

786 PEOPLE CAME TO ONE OR MORE OF OUR EVENTS

1,286 TOTAL EVENT REGISTRATIONS



POLICY

21 REPORTS, RESOURCES & FACT SHEETS

22 POLICY BRIEFS/UPDATED BRIEFS

23 SUBMISSIONS & JOINT STATEMENTS

15 HANSARD MENTIONS



ONLINE

24,654 WEBSITE VISITORS (+28%)

107,063 WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS (+37%)

88,760 FACEBOOK PAGE REACH

330,155 TWITTER IMPRESSIONS @SACOSS

72,294 LINKEDIN IMPRESSIONS



COMMUNICATIONS

36 eBULLETINS, COVID & EVENT NEWS UPDATES

14 MEMBER ADVISORIES & MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

29 MEDIA RELEASES & ALERTS

11 POLICY & ADVOCACY NEWS UPDATES



SACOSS across 75 years...

In honour of arriving at our 75th annual report, for this year's edition we have some voices from the past: extracts from our history, *The SACOSS Story*, and annual reports from across the decades. Below you will read slices of time that often echo eerily close to experiences of today. Read on to find out more about where we began, and the values that brought us to today...

06

75th ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22 | A FAIR & JUST COMMUNITY

“ On 6 June 1946 Reg Coombe put the resolution to a rather scantily-attended Council meeting that, ‘the Youth Welfare Co-ordinating Council **merge into a wider body representing interests concerned with the social welfare of the community as a whole** and not youth alone and that the name of this organisation is to be the SA Council of Social Services (SACOSS) (including Youth Welfare Coordinating Council)’. The resolution was accepted with only one, unnamed, dissenter. The structure of the revised organisation was established as Patron, President, six Vice-Presidents, Chairman, 17 members of the Central Committee, and the main body of members consisting of the representatives of all member organisations.”

**The SACOSS Story, 1947-1997,
Michael Page, 2002**

“ The Marriage Guidance committee, inspired by Reg Coombe, seemed to make the greatest impact especially since the Churches group reinforced them for lack of another function. Possibly Coombe had observed early marriage guidance councils during his 1939 travels in the northern hemisphere. He and SACOSS were certainly pioneers of the movement in Australia, where they began about the same time in Sydney and Adelaide. In Adelaide the initial idea was to prepare couples for the perhaps unexpected problems of creating lasting relationships **at a time when marriages contracted during the haste and glamour of wartime were collapsing by the thousand.**”

**The SACOSS Story, 1947-1997,
Michael Page, 2002**

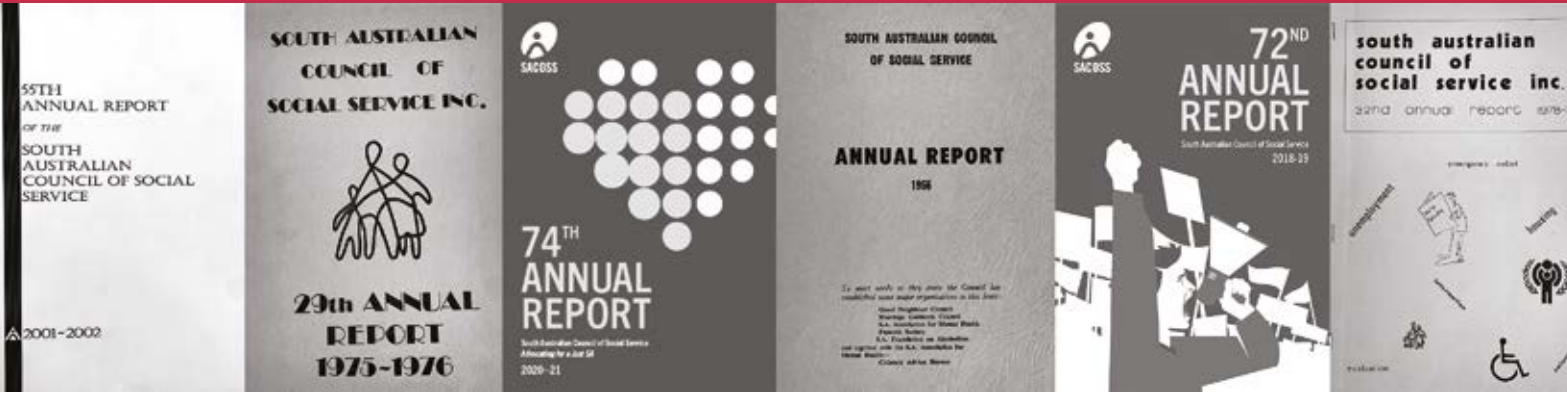
“ The New Secretary: 1952-1956. The secretary/ treasurer had plenty to keep him or her busy. It was necessary to have a mind for detail, to act as a database for information required by the Council and a reporter who could translate Council decisions into the minutes required to record them and the letters to convey them. The job demanded tact, intelligence, patience, a facility with figures to carry out the Treasurer's duties and a mind orderly enough to keep all the paperwork in order – **especially when the Council had no permanent home and the secretary worked out of a briefcase.**”

**The SACOSS Story, 1947-1997,
Michael Page, 2002**

“ Lord Beveridge said that the state should be responsible for minimum conditions of health, nutrition, education, and, generally speaking, minimum material standards. But there is a great amount of unhappiness and difficulty curable by social action which is not due only or mainly to lack of money – for example the problems of the old, the children, the unmarried mother and the discharged prisoner. Voluntary action is able to supply certain personal services more effectively **... the Council of Social Service is glad to be a meeting ground where voluntary and statutory bodies meet to work together for the common good ...**”

Annual Report, 1954-55

“ Pounds for Pensioners: The administration of this Fund for Christmas Cheer for needy pensioners was undertaken last November at the request of News Ltd. **Every effort was made to make the gifts as personal as possible, and all the gift cards bore the recipient's name in handwriting.** Names of needy pensioners were sought from all over the State, and our thanks are



due to Town and District Clerks, Ministers of Religion, Doctors and others for their help ... Nearly 4,000 gift orders were distributed ... we are grateful to all who helped from early morning to late at night so that the orders would be received a week before Christmas Day.”

Annual Report, 1954-55

“ The Standing Committee of the Churches, with official representation from Baptist, Catholic, Church of Christ, Church of England, Congregational, Greek Orthodox, Hebrew Congregation, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Salvation Army, Society of Friends and Unitarian churches has met monthly since November 1956 and has studied the social implications of Automation. **It has now issued a booklet for group discussion, “You and Automation”.** In a review, Dr G. Harcourt of the University of Adelaide says: ‘The compilers ... are to be congratulated on the logical order in which the questions are prescribed and on the concise and relevant summaries ... They have focused attention on the problems specifically associated with automation ... **Finally, they ask for a discussion on the relationship between the religious notion of the stewardship of the resources of God’s earth and automation.**”

Annual Report, 1959-60

“ Although Britain set up the first Council of Social Service 47 years ago, and the bigger cities of the United Kingdom began to take up the idea gradually, the time has now come when even the smaller cities and towns look on a Council as a necessity. **It seems in line with this expansion that our own national body, the Australian Council of Social Service, should have been given proper recognition by the Commonwealth Government** and be relieved of the constant strain of trying to carry out a national service on a struggling budget. We are grateful to the Government for the financial assistance which will give more freedom to meet the growing scope of work of the Australian Council.”

Annual Report, 1966-67

“ After 18 years of splendid service to the Council as Secretary/Treasurer, Miss Casely resigned at the end of June, 1970. Through this long period she has left a wonderful record of work for the Council, of the extent of which few can have any real comprehension. **There have been times of difficulty and frustration, of much hard effort and seemingly little result – yet, through all this, Edith Casely never gave up** – her refreshing and contagious faith in the purposes of the Council made a steadily expanding impact within its work. The solid achievements of the Council during this period of almost two decades of vast social readjustment, have been very significant.”

**Annual Report, 1969-70,
Mrs E.M. Hutchison, Executive Officer**

“ Temporary Emergency Housing Survey: **The problem of finding emergency accommodation is one faced almost daily by welfare organisations in South Australia.** Many Social Workers have expressed concern at the difficulties experienced by people, families and individuals who are temporarily displaced because of some emergency (medical, social or financial), and are without accommodation. There is very little suitable accommodation available for people in such circumstances. The South Australian Council of Social Service ad hoc Housing Committee has been concerned about this matter for some time and to get factual details of the situation surveys were made in 1973 and 1974.”

Annual Report, 1973-74

“ There are many challenges ahead. Not least of these will be to address with utmost honesty the problems confronting long-term unemployed people in our State. **The future of so many young people and families is at stake that policy formulation should be regarded as above party politics.** Ideological posturing and political point scoring have no place in efforts to meet the needs of growing numbers of disadvantaged persons in our nation. Now is the time for statesmanship rather than politics.”

**Annual Report, 1980-81,
Gary Killington, Chairman**



“ Increasingly, it appeared to the Council and its members that Labor Governments of the early 1980s regard sound economic management as incompatible with reforms undertaken on the scale, or at a pace, which would significantly reduce poverty in Australia in the short term. **This realisation has confronted the welfare community with a dilemma.** Having long sought improvements in welfare and taxation policies well beyond the slow incrementalist approach of most recent Budgets, the welfare community must now decide, in the face of mounting criticism both from inside and outside Parliament, whether further to pursue these goals, or to accept a more limited programme of change.”

**Annual Report, 1983-84,
Lange Powell, Executive Officer**

“ We are a nation in which the vagaries of birth, age, sex, race and differing abilities and circumstances pre-determine who will prosper and who will be shut out. **We are a nation in which major economic policies favour the better-off and in which the privilege of wealth is underwritten by the taxation system,** despite the [recently held] Taxation Summit. These structural inequalities and their implications for poverty, have been exacerbated during the past decade, particularly by three major factors: firstly, by demographic changes. Australia has an ageing population, an increasing proportion of whom are dependent on diminishing incomes during their post-retirement lives. Many elderly Australians live in what is euphemistically called “genteel poverty”. **Poverty is never genteel; poverty is an outrage.** Secondly, economic changes; job opportunities are shrinking, both as a result of economic downturn and as a result of the new technology ... Thirdly, there have been significant social changes; the emergence of a single parent family – 96% of which are headed by women, and the transient nature of family life where one in every three marriages today ends in divorce or separation.”

**Annual Report, 1985-86,
Judith Roberts AM, Chairperson**

“ In our field there has been a commitment for many years to trying to improve consumer participation etc. It will be important that we work with consumers of community services to find a way for their interests to be represented in the new ‘industrialised’ social and community services sector. **That is, a commitment to the principle that consumers are an industry partner in this industry.”**

**Annual Report, 1989-90,
Helen Disney, Chairperson**

“ Some of those opportunities to work with consumers have moved me deeply. When you have the opportunity, as I have had at SACOSS, to meet consumers in almost every area of human service delivery, you realise the significance of this sector as a whole and the challenge we face to have middle (and upper) Australia understand and appreciate the contribution community services and consumers make to our society. The notion that this industry is a drain on the public purse and that the private sector is the fount of all wisdom and the model for productivity astounds me now. **The failure to acknowledge this sector’s contribution and the value of home-based care in the Gross Domestic Product makes absolutely no economic sense.”**

**Annual Report, 1993-94,
Elizabeth Morgan, Executive Director**

“ Issues presented by rural communities focussed very much on the withdrawal of services by Federal and State Governments and companies with an ever growing reliance on volunteers to provide services and to build communities. **People from rural communities regularly have told us how exhausted they feel and how frustrated they are** that indirectly they are being asked to assume more responsibilities in community development and in supporting individuals in need. There was also considerable concern coming from smaller rural communities about the future of their towns and growing tensions with regional centres and Adelaide.”

**Annual Report, 1997-98,
Mark Henley, Executive Director**



“ There is a great deal of talk about the new economy: we know that it can benefit the world. To date there is precious little evidence of this on a per capita basis. More poor people are without food. **If we look at SA as an example: 20 years ago we were essentially a middle class state. Now we have over 7,000 people homeless on any one night.** Over 23% of households have incomes below the poverty line in SA. For me the new economy provides some opportunities but unless we seriously manage the synergies between environmental, economic and social policies – as distinct from simply adopting the language of sustainable development – and unless our governments take a leadership role in helping us to define our future in those terms, then a new economy will be for nothing.”

**Annual Report, 2000-01,
Gael Fraser, Chairperson**

“ SACOSS was a partner in a major conference on sustainability held in April with over 300 participants. The SA Collaboration was launched at the conference. Bringing SACOSS, the Conservation Council of SA, the United Trades and Labor Council and the Multicultural Communities Council together, **the Collaboration supports research and action to promote a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable society.**”

**Annual Report, 2003-04,
Pam Simmons, Executive Director**

“ Over the past year I have been really impressed with the way SACOSS has taken up the issues of poverty and inequality ... Unfortunately, under the current federal government, it seems that the principles of equality and fairness no longer receive the recognition and respect they deserve. **Easy-going acceptance of the rights of each individual to pursue, and be granted, opportunity, seems to be on the decline.** We have let suspicion come into our attitudes and a feeling that opportunity for

one will result in a diminution of opportunity for one’s self. I was, however, pleased to see the withdrawal of the Migration Amendment (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill 2006 recently, which was a piece of legislation contrary to Australia’s fundamental generosity as a nation.”

**Annual Report, 2005-06,
Barbara Garrett MBE, President**

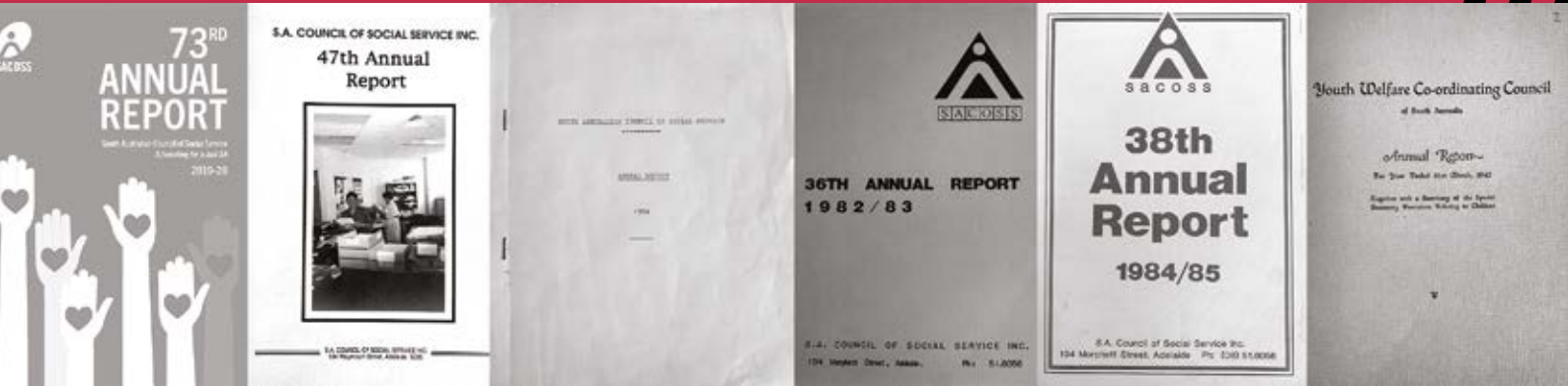
“ SACOSS, **through our Blueprint for the elimination of poverty, has continued to put cogent and robust arguments and public policy alternatives** to the South Australian Government and community. These are not always popular and seldom universally supported positions. In the main, they require a re-prioritising of agendas and public expenditures – a redistribution of community wealth.”

**Annual Report, 2006-07,
Simon Schrapel, Chair**

“ This year has been exciting as we plan for the state election in 2010: **the aim for this election is to build on the concept of participative democracy.** We are aiming to get as deep into the community as we can and bring the people of South Australia closer to the politicians. We have developed a range of ‘principles papers’ to inform the development of the policy platforms that will be taken to the election, and have planned a range of advocacy days for people with lived experience of disadvantage to talk directly to those politicians.”

**Annual Report, 2008-09,
Karen Grogan, Executive Director**

“ **At a time when individuals are increasingly being blamed and shamed for the failure of a poorly performing social infrastructure and economy,** we have stepped up to be not only a voice for low income South Australians but to have a direct impact on areas of policy and service delivery at a local level, and gain some real ground. After intensive policy and advocacy work, and political campaigning, a number of amendments



relating to tenant protection, hardship processes and consumer advocacy were made. In relation to the State Water Bill, we also were successful with the campaign for the consumer impact review of the National Energy Retail Law and for funding to conduct a scoping study on the need for a Consumer Credit Legal Service.

**Annual Report, 2011-12,
Helen Connolly, Chair**

“ Woolies – The Pokies People, held its AGM in Adelaide this year and activist shareholders concerned about profits being generated from their poker machine holdings, and the level of harm flowing through problem gambling, forced Woolworths to hold an EGM to consider changing its constitution. This would have meant limiting and making its machine holdings safer. **We joined with local activist group Communities Against Pokies in supporting protests outside the EGM** and with the help of shareholder proxies obtained from SACOSS members, voted in support of the proposed amendments. Inevitably, the vote failed, but for a moment a huge light was shining on the problematic contribution of pokies to our

community and Woolworths’ role and brand as a family friendly grocer. We are still working to get funding to enable SACOSS to construct some longer term policy and advocacy work in this crucial area.”

**Annual Report, 2012-13,
Ross Womersley, Executive Director**

“ An ongoing concern is the impact of **a new face of inequality – an inequality that has emerged because of the way the digital world has changed our lives**, including changing the way we make things, the jobs we do, the way we do business, the way we learn, the way we communicate, the ways we can come together even across vast distances, and so it goes on. The trouble is, and the story is not an unfamiliar one, some of us are resourced in ways that mean we have the ability, the equipment, the skills, and the access to use these opportunities for the best. But there are also substantial groups of people who are not. The more separate and distant they get from the good things the digital world offers, the more they fall behind and in the end, miss out.”

**Annual Report, 2017-18,
Ross Womersley, CEO & David Panter, Chair**



SACOSS life member Daphne Gum MBE, OBE. Daphne was the last Chair of Marjorie Black House Inc, which is today the home of SACOSS, thanks to her support.



Cover the Basics platform

We are extremely lucky to live in a great state in a prosperous country – and that most of us can simply take this for granted. But despite our state's strengths and assets, many South Australians are still being denied life's basics. This has been the focus of SACOSS' ongoing advocacy over the past 75 years and, every four years, state elections come along to help provide an added impetus for politicians and policy-makers to hear our calls.

In politics, and during election times in particular – state or federal – everyone is selling their version of 'the dream'. Rhetoric abounds ... A better, stronger state. A happy, resilient state. A state that bounces back, that grows and succeeds. That's future focussed, and tech-savvy. A state full of jobs, jobs, jobs. A state that aims for the stars, and beyond.

For too many South Australians these aspirational visions are a far cry from their day-to-day reality. And generally, big-dollar commitments to new entertainment developments, business enticements, or big tax breaks, won't make their lives better.

With this in mind, in the lead-up to the March 2022 state election, SACOSS advocated on a platform calling on politicians, leaders and policy-makers to 'Cover the Basics'. We identified a range of state-level actions that will help reduce inequality, and make a genuine difference for people who are struggling. This call is, of course, ever more important as we continue to grapple with the effects of, and recovery from, the COVID pandemic.

Grouped around the concept of addressing people's 'basic needs' our pre-election policy platform identified the key areas of rental affordability, safe water, digital inclusion, public health, and fairer concessions.

A range of other advocacy calls were also grouped under a 'protection and support' theme. This included social protections, financial assistance, climate change and disaster resilience, and sector support.

Our Cover the Basics policy prescriptions for 2022 and beyond were summarised in our 'Cover the Basics' website and platform document, and reported on in our pre-election Report Card'. The 'Cover

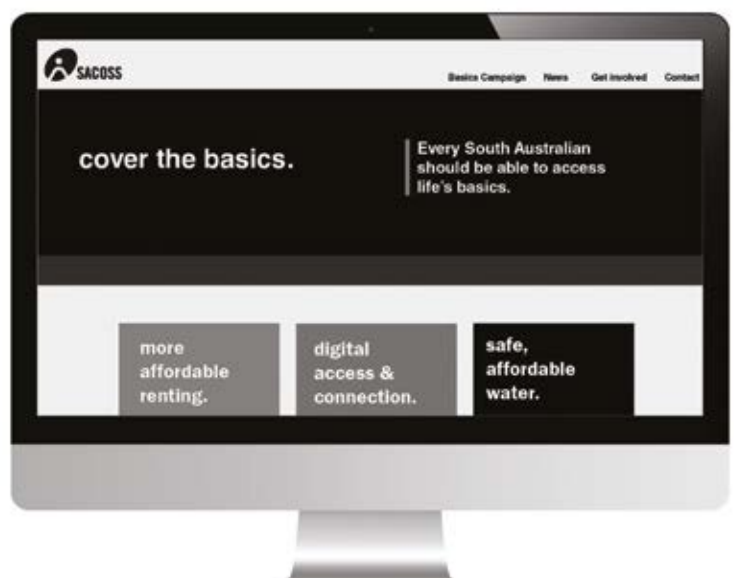
the Basics' theming also complemented national advocacy on the need to raise the rate of income support to a liveable level.

Our Cover the Basics advocacy included the development and distribution of policy briefs for all key issues; letters; personal briefings for ministers and key political leaders; and providing evidence and submissions to parliamentary/government processes; as well as undertaking a range of other campaign activities. Our platform document was sent to the parliamentary parties pre-election and the major parties' responses were assessed in our Election Report Card. We used mainstream media, and our own social media accounts, as well as our *eBulletin* and other communications channels, to get our messages out.

With a very modest advertising budget, we also ran ads on news.com.au and in Indaily, and were lucky to also have an advertisement in the WOMADelaide pocket guide (thank you to Arts Projects and the WOMAD team). Our Pre-Election Report Card was published in *The Advertiser* as a print ad prior to the election, as per tradition.

Our 'Cover the Basics' website went live in November 2021, and by election time it had reached approximately 50 pages and gained over 4,000 page views. Some dedicated pre-election events were held, and other SACOSS events were taken as an opportunity to underline and explore some of the key platform themes and issues, and proposed solutions.

We saw progress over 2021-22 on various counts in each of our key advocacy areas, although there is clearly much more to do. Our Cover the Basics advocacy continues post-election, and we will continue to use this theme. You can read more about our key Cover the Basics themes and our work on them in 2021-22 over the coming pages. Our state offers much, but for too many, it simply fails to cover the basics. Let's make that change.



cover the basics.

2 'ON THE COUCH' EVENTS AND ONE RENTERS' FORUM WITH 400+ TOTAL REGISTRATIONS (PLUS LIVE VIEWS)

1 JOINT FORUM ON **PUBLIC HEALTH** WITH THE PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION (SA) AND THE AUSTRALIAN HEALTH PROMOTION ASSOCIATION (SA)

1 JOINT FORUM ON **RENTAL AFFORDABILITY** AND RENTERS' RIGHTS WITH THE ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK SA, BETTER RENTING AND SHELTER SA

4,000+ VIEWS ON OUR COVER THE BASICS WEBSITE

1 PLATFORM DOCUMENT WITH 5 KEY THEMES

20 PRIMARY POLICY CALLS

15 ADDITIONAL 'PROTECTION & SUPPORT' MEASURES

24 POLICY BRIEFS

2 COST OF LIVING REPORTS

5 OPINION PIECES

Every South Australian should be able to access life's basics



Rental affordability

Our call for State Government action to make renting more affordable

Stable and secure housing is the primary platform for connection to economic and social community life, providing a base that enables people to overcome challenges and live a decent life.

Increasing rents and house prices mean people struggle to stay housed, are forced to live in sub-standard homes, or live far from jobs and services, and have difficulty covering other basic living costs.

Over the past year we have seen a long-sought change in public dialogue about housing. The plight of renters in a competitive, costly market and, in particular, of people who are living on the lowest incomes, no longer appears invisible next to the worries of homeowners (or potential homeowners) about interest rates and house prices.

At last, we are seeing more of the conversations we need to have about public housing, and how it contributes to rental affordability across the board by putting downward pressure on the housing market, as well as creating much-needed homes for people who are otherwise locked out.

A call for a major investment in more public housing was a key advocacy area of SACOSS in 2021-22 as part of our 'Cover the Basics' pre-election policy platform.

Noting Victoria's \$5.3bn 'Big Housing Build' in response to the COVID pandemic, we called for the pro-rata equivalent investment for SA (\$1.4 billion over 4 years). This is needed because in the twenty years 2001-2021, the total number of social housing dwellings in SA fell by 11,645 tenements, a decline of 21%. Public housing dwelling numbers fell even more: by 19,822, or a massive 38% of their number in 2001. This was partly due to the transfer of over 1,000 public houses to community housing providers in 2017-18, but also due to a long-term sell-off of public housing.

A Legislative Select Committee inquiry into the privatisation of public services in August 2021 provided an opportunity for SACOSS to spotlight the massive reduction in the number of public houses in recent decades, and its implications. In evidence to the committee, we looked at a recent Seaton redevelopment where ageing public housing residences were replaced by largely private housing as a case study.

“ Over the past year we have seen a long-sought change in public dialogue about housing

We found that the even where the private housing is designated as 'affordable' it remains unaffordable to those on the very lowest incomes. The real beneficiaries of privatisation are those in the middle or higher-wealth brackets, and the big banks who will finance the mortgages to fund the purchases.

To give some sense of the scale of policy response required, at 30 June 2021, there were 15,988 applicants on the public housing waiting list (excluding applicants for transfers between houses). This equated to 51% of the total public housing stock.



In the lead-up to the 2022 State Election, SACOSS published a Cost of Living Report on rental affordability, and we were glad to see SA Labor commit to stopping the decline in public housing in SA, and pledge a notable investment of just-under \$180 million to build new public housing and bring unused or poor-quality homes up to standard. We were also glad to see the federal Labor Government pledge action on public and affordable housing as one of its own election promises, this having been a key area of national advocacy by ACOSS and across the Councils of Social Service network. At a local level, SACOSS also supported the national Everybody's Home campaign, which took the need to build more social and affordable housing as a key focus.

“ SACOSS will continue to speak out strongly for practical measures that will make a genuine difference

SACOSS capitalised on increasing media interest in rental affordability during 2021-22, incorporating discussion on the issues across a range of radio, television, online and print stories, including opinion pieces in *The Advertiser* and *Indaily*, and creating a video for social media: 'A Cold Winter's Night'. Rental affordability was also a key item raised and discussed at our Regional Roundtables in Murray Bridge (August 2021) and Kadina (April 2022), and of course our 2021 AGM featured a talk by academic and journalist Peter Mares on housing

affordability. What we learnt provided valuable insights for our advocacy and public comment.

Knowing that energy costs comprise another large expense for renters on low incomes, we also targeted this area, with a call for minimum energy efficiency standards for rental properties, and mandatory disclosure of energy efficiency ratings for rental properties. To help bring the necessary improvements to public and community housing, we further called for an investment of \$64 million over 4 years to achieve this.

Energy affordability was also a focus of national ACOSS advocacy, and our local work on energy efficiency standards was complemented by our collaboration with national campaigns (and state-based activities) such as Better Renting's Healthy Homes for Renters campaign. To help bring these issues alive in the lead-up to the SA State Election, we held a Housing Affordability and Renters' Rights Forum in February 2022, together with Shelter SA, Better Renting and the Anti-Poverty Network SA.

Originally planned as an in-person event in West Torrens – an electorate with a high proportion of renters – we moved to an online format, due to COVID. As well as highlighting the direct experiences of renters, the forum included presentations from two West Torrens candidates – the Greens' Peta-Anne Louth, and the sitting MP and energy shadow minister (and now minister) Tom Koutsantonis.

With rising energy prices, as well as rental affordability woes, continuing to win headlines, it is clear that both issues will remain prominent in the public consciousness. SACOSS will continue to speak out strongly for practical measures that will make a genuine difference for people on low incomes who are struggling, or at a disadvantage.



Energy

Our work to protect people on low incomes from unmanageable energy costs

Household energy bills comprise a major expense for people on low incomes – in fact, low-income South Australians spend twice as much of their income on energy as South Australians on an average income. For this reason, energy is a key area of SACOSS research, policy work and advocacy. While advocating in 2021-22 for measures to help people on low incomes have more energy efficient homes (see page 14), we also took a broader look at energy costs and concessions. This work proved especially topical in the current context of strong public and political concern about rising energy prices.

In the national context, we engaged with the Australian Energy Regulator’s (AER) Rate of Return and Default Market Offer consultations. We highlighted energy affordability concerns in SA, including the need to keep the rate of return for network services and the default market offer for standing customers as low as possible. SACOSS also contributed to consultation on the AER’s Consumer Vulnerability Strategy (now finalised as the Towards Energy Equity Strategy). We reinforced the need for a social equity objective to be included in the National Energy Market Objective, so that no consumers are left behind in the energy transition, and *all* consumers have equitable access to future benefits. We also provided feedback to the Australian Energy Market Operator on the Draft Integrated System Plan Strategy.

SACOSS took a leading role, partnered with ACOSS, on national research on energy concessions, in a project funded by Energy Consumers Australia. The research considered how energy concessions can be more equitable and responsive to change in both energy price and consumption. The report, due to be released in 2022-23, complements our ongoing work on concessions.

As well as our interest in hardship provisions, our Cover the Basics platform included a range of policy calls relating to energy, including shifting from a flat rate to a percentage-based energy concession, increasing the shared-householder income limits for the energy

concession, and introducing partial energy concessions for share-householders. We are also seeking a review of the eligibility criteria for the Emergency Electricity Payment Scheme (EEPS) with a view to raising the debt cap and ensuring those on hardship programs are not prevented from eligibility or referral. Also on the list is requiring all retailers to ‘knock before you disconnect’, and legislation to prevent people being forced to pay for a gas connection in new residential developments.

In terms of state-based consultations, throughout 2021-22 SACOSS has repeatedly voiced our concern about the recent imposition of mandatory prepayment for electricity on people living in remote South Australian Aboriginal communities. We have highlighted the removal of choice, and the negative health, economic and social impacts of energy insecurity resulting from repeated disconnections experienced as a result of prepayment.

SACOSS also contributed to the SA Essential Services Commission’s development of a Consumer Protection Code and review of the Prepayment Meter System Code, to better protect energy customers living in regional and remote South Australia, who are not protected under the National Energy Customer Framework.

Through the Department of Energy and Mining’s accelerated roll-out of smart meters consultation, SACOSS raised concerns around mandatory time-of-use-tariffs for smart meter customers in SA, noting the inability of some customers with disabilities or experiencing disadvantage to shift their energy use, and the heightened risk of bill shock. We also highlighted the risks of increased network costs through DEM’s consultation on new powers and standards for the Office of the Technical Regulator.

In terms of engagement, we continued to host the Essential Services Group, and provided input into SA Power Networks Reset process through representation on various consultation groups. We also continued to work through the challenges of convening the National Energy Roundtable in the midst of COVID, undertaking planning to refresh the governance and operations for this informal coalition of national and jurisdictional energy consumer advocates.

With energy costs and pressures not set to leave the headlines and political agenda anytime soon, we will continue to use public, departmental and political avenues to push for better measures to protect and assist people on low incomes to have manageable energy costs, allowing more space to meet other household needs, and have better thermal comfort at home.

Water

Our work on water security across SA, and to support water consumers who are on low incomes

In 2021-22, SACOSS had three key areas of policy and advocacy focus within our water portfolio: remote water security; engaging in SA Water's Regulatory Process for the 2024 - 28 period; and supporting the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) to administer the Consumer Advocacy and Research Fund (CARF).

Building on policy and advocacy in previous years, SACOSS continued to advocate for improved access to safe and affordable drinking water in remote and regional South Australia. Key outcomes included:

- Developing a policy platform for water security in remote South Australia and seeking commitment from all parties to adopt and action it in the next term of government.
- Socialising the policy platform with key stakeholders to build understanding and awareness of the key issues.
- Gaining commitment from the State Government via the State Implementation Plan of the National Closing the Gap Agreement, to develop a standard for a basic level of safe and reliable potable water for self-supplied remote communities, including Aboriginal communities. SACOSS advocated for this policy via the 2021 report we commissioned from Aither, submissions to the Productivity Commission's National Water Reform, and as a part of the water security policy platform.
- SACOSS informed and supported DEW's policy processes related to remote water security, including self-supplied remote communities' water stocktake, and development of a basic level of service.

September 2021 saw the release of the Productivity Commission's final report into National Water Reform, to which we gave evidence and made a submission earlier in the year. In line with SACOSS' advocacy, the Commission made recommendations

on securing equitable access to safe and reliable drinking water for all Australians, and we used the opportunity to highlight our calls in a media release. Fixing drinking water supply for regional and remote SA was a key pillar of our Cover the Basics advocacy platform and gained notable media interest throughout the campaign, particularly from regional media.

Following SACOSS' strong advocacy, together with others, on the need for the state government to develop a basic level of service for all South Australians, the state government undertook to develop a standard from which to do so, by 2022.

The value of setting a basic level of service was further underlined in our October 2021 submission to the Department for Environment and Water on Future Urban Water Directions, where we also put an eye to the future, with new and emerging technologies, and the importance of community engagement, social responsibility, and health equity.

Of course, SACOSS is not a lone voice on safe drinking water for regional SA - far from it - and our work across 2021-22 was enhanced by links formed earlier with the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) and the Productivity Commission. The value of collaboration was reflected in an insightful session on water justice in a changing climate at our November 2021 *Liveable Futures* conference, which featured speakers from WSAA, the Productivity Commission, and the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation.





Our Cover the Basics water advocacy highlighted two further calls for statewide change: for all ministerial directions for SA Water expenditure to be either funded directly from Treasury or, at a minimum, included in the regulatory review of SA Water’s expenditure; and for legislative change to see landlords responsible for paying water supply charges.

While notable progress has been made in 2021-22, SACOSS will continue our advocacy for the reforms that are needed for more affordable, equitable access to that life essential: water.

“ SACOSS will continue our advocacy for the reforms that are needed for more affordable, equitable access to that life essential: water ”

Also on the water policy front, SACOSS has engaged with SA Water and other consumer and community organisations in the regulatory determination process for 2024 - 28 (RD24). Our advocacy was focussed on best supporting water consumers on low-incomes across a variety of segments.

Key outcomes included advocating for better-informed consumer engagement, leading to the establishment of SA Water’s Peak Bodies

Engagement Forum (PBEF). The PBEF was not initially included as part of SA Water’s engagement program or via the Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA)’s framework and approach. The establishment of the PBEF has allowed for an increased diversity of views across a variety of representative groups, and helps to build the capacity of the community sector to engage in a crucial regulatory process.

Supporting the social services sector via the CARF Grants Program was another important area of work across 2021-22. During this period, SACOSS supported the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) to shift the Consumer Advocacy and Research Fund (CARF) to an open grants process, including supporting organisations to develop proposals and applications for funding, and providing project support for funded projects, including:

- The Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT)’s Water Management Workshops examining water management issues impacting communities on Trust land. The Umoona Aboriginal Community in Coober Pedy has been the focus for the ongoing project, given the unique and complex water supply and management arrangements for the community. SACOSS has worked closely with the ALT and DEW to develop shared understandings between key stakeholders on the complexity of supplying and maintaining safe and reliable water for the Umoona Community, that meets the needs of everyone involved. Workshops are planned for 2022-23 to bring together key stakeholders and take steps towards resolving outstanding issues.
- The Uniting Communities Tenants as Water Customers project aimed at improving outcomes for tenants via legislative changes to the Water Industry Act 2012 and Residential Tenancies Act 1995. SACOSS contributed to the development of an issues paper on equitable water billing and an associated stakeholder forum in June 2022. SACOSS will continue to work with Uniting Communities and other key stakeholders in 2022-23 to advocate for key legislative changes.

All in all, 2021-22 has been a very constructive year in terms of our water work - which continues in 2022 and beyond.

Digital inclusion

Our call for a plan and sustained investment to ensure no South Australian is left behind in the digital world

There is no doubt that digital technologies are now taking a key role in our economic and social life, but the “digital divide” remains a critical issue. In 2021-22 SACOSS continued to build on our strong advocacy in this space. Digital inclusion was one of the five key pillars in our ‘Cover the Basics’ election platform, and was reported on in our assessment of the major parties’ policies. It was also a focus of our state budget advocacy and analysis.

“As more people, more businesses and more government services go online, the disadvantages of being digitally excluded increase

As more people, more businesses and more 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 threw some of these challenges into stark relief, with the online world becoming more and more important.

In 2021, the then-government began work identifying priority areas and principles for a state digital inclusion strategy – something SACOSS had been lobbying for. We were glad to contribute to

the former state government’s co-design process for the strategy, which was led by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Disappointingly, the strategy was not finished before the state election and its fate is now unclear.

Digital inclusion was one of the weaker areas of the Labor response to SACOSS’ pre-election policy platform calls, so we will continue to work hard to see that the new government both understands how critical this issue is, and acts on it.

One notable pre-election win was the state government’s announcement in February 2022 of funding to provide support and equipment for students to develop their digital skills. In particular, a commitment of \$23 million to provide internet connectivity and devices to low-income families who might otherwise be locked out of access to digital technology.





While this was a positive move, it is clear that a unified, and comprehensive response is required to really advance digital inclusion across our state. With this in mind, a key element of our digital inclusion work in 2021-22 was the development of a set of digital inclusion goals or benchmarks for government. These cover key requirements for all South Australians; all secondary school students; people with disability; and minimum requirements for public access points.

Of course, achieving progress on digital inclusion also requires investment in a range of areas. We called for the state government to match the \$120 million it previously invested in improving its own information technology services (under the Digital Restart Fund) towards achieving the digital inclusion goals we identified.

We know that while South Australia lags behind in national digital inclusion measures, regional SA lags yet further behind. We shone a spotlight on this area, releasing a summary data fact sheet on digital inclusion by regional area, drawn from South Australia's results in the 2021 Australian Digital Inclusion Index. We also discussed the results across regional media platforms.

This advocacy was complemented by practical work to create digital resource guides for three regional SA areas – the Yorke Peninsula, Karoonda East Murray and Peterborough. This work was funded by the Wyatt Foundation and was focussed on areas that in the Australian Digital Inclusion Index were likely to have high rates of digital exclusion.

The guides were launched at SACOSS' Regional Roundtable for the Yorke and North Region, which was held in Kadina in April 2022. It brought together a wide range of people from our sector as well as local government, and also provided a forum to discuss other key regional challenges (and strengths).

Our work with regional councils provided a strong springboard to plan further council and community-based engagement in the years to come. We know that libraries, local councils and community centres are at the forefront in assisting people in our communities to gain digital access and skills, and we will continue to speak out in

support of funding for initiatives such as the Being Digital program in public libraries.

There is clearly much more to do, but our work in 2021-22 has added new dimensions to our previous research into telecommunications affordability, and the insights we gained previously into the impacts of COVID-19 measures on people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

At a national level, the Good Things Foundation's Get Online Week, together with the Australian Digital Inclusion Index, provide major platforms to help raise awareness of digital inclusion challenges, and it has been great to see our local work reflected and referenced in some of the national resources created.





Concessions

Our call to fix concessions, so that everyone in South Australia who needs concessions can access them

The South Australian government offers a range of discounts, subsidies or payment exemptions to assist people on low incomes to meet basic living costs. These concessions are extremely important, but the concessions system in SA presents a complex patchwork of different payments with varying eligibility criteria. The system is complex to navigate, and worse, creates poverty premiums and barriers to accessing support.

To help identify the issues, and provide constructive avenues for improvement, SACOSS examined SA state government concessions and, in October 2021, released our report *The State of Concessions in South Australia*. The SACOSS report made 3 overall recommendations, which were incorporated into our pre-election Cover the Basics policy platform:

- A broad state government review of the concession system to ensure consistency, proper targeting and ease of access across the system.
- Extension of all concessions available to age pension recipients to other Centrelink recipients who are receiving lower payments.
- An additional low-income eligibility criteria for all concessions, which is not based on receipt of Centrelink benefits.

The report also made 10 recommendations for reform of specific concessions, which were also included on our pre-election advocacy.

In the lead-up to the state election, the Labor Party promised a review of the concessions system (as recommended by SACOSS), and work has begun on that review within government.

Another positive move pre-election was a Labor commitment on the Cost of Living concession. We know from our ongoing research and quarterly Cost of Living Updates that cost of living pressures impact most on those on low incomes, and that renters are particularly hit as they generally have lower incomes and less ability to invest in cost-saving home improvements. Given this, our *State of Concessions* report highlighted the anomaly that low-income renters receive half the Cost of Living concession that homeowners do (except for some retirees).

SACOSS called for a doubling of the rate for renters, to bring it to the same level as homeowners. We were partly successful in that the state budget provided for a one-off doubling of the concession in 2022-23, but this was only a temporary measure and, as the homeowners concession also doubled, the anomaly and poverty premium for renters remains.

Public transport was another area of SACOSS advocacy in the concessions space: we continued our call for free public transport for children and young people to the end of secondary school, and for seniors' concessions to be applied to all concession holders. With a welcome extension to free public transport for Seniors Card holders by the new government, we would like to see the same applied for others struggling on similarly low (or lower) incomes.

In February 2022 SACOSS also released our *Protecting the Basics* report, which examined insurance access for people on low incomes, especially with reference to climate emergencies. Insurance premiums have doubled in Adelaide since 2000, and will continue to rise with increased natural disasters. Affordability is a major barrier to people on low incomes accessing insurance, and people in this situation are less likely to be in a position to mitigate risk, more likely to live in risky areas, and have less capacity and built-in supports to be able to more easily 'bounce-back' from major loss or damage.



We called for the government to implement a percentage-based concession scheme for home, contents and vehicle insurance for people on low incomes, modelled on the existing cost of living concessions. The importance of this call has been underlined by our ongoing work looking at climate change and disaster risk reduction (see page 24), which will continue to be an area of SACOSS advocacy.

“ ... the concessions system in SA presents a complex patchwork of different payments with varying eligibility criteria

With health very much in the spotlight in the past two years, another notable area of our concessions advocacy in 2021-22 was on the cost of ambulance cover. While ramping hit the headlines and ambulances were chalked with calls for support, we asked the question: what if you can't afford to call one?

The cost for an emergency call-out and trip to hospital in SA is over \$1000, plus a per/km charge, and our fee is the second highest in the country (after Victoria). Emergency ambulances are free in Queensland and Tasmania, and the cost in NSW is less than half of the SA fee. There is a 50% discount for age pensioners, but not for other Centrelink recipients, or other people on low incomes.

There is also an Ambulance Cover insurance concession available for pensioners. As part of our Cover the Basics platform we called for this concession to be extended to those on lower incomes. Our preferred policy position is free emergency ambulance services for all, but making protection less expensive for people on low incomes would be a start. Ultimately, we need a fundamental rethink of ambulance funding and costs.

We were joined in our advocacy by the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Louise DaCosta Trust, issuing a joint media release that gained notable interest, helping to shine a light on this important but often overlooked barrier for people on low incomes accessing a vital emergency service.





Public health

Our call to learn the lessons of COVID and invest in public health and prevention

Health has been very much on the agenda over the past three years. Public health has arguably never had a better profile. But while our governments and health system have been stepping up to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, the business-as-usual aspects of health care remain as important as ever.

The pandemic has provided global lessons on the importance of public health and prevention strategies that aim to improve the health of the community as a whole and prevent people from becoming unwell in the first place.

We know that many of the strategies we need involve multi-sector collaboration to impact on the causes of ill health – which include the social, environmental and political settings in which people live, work and play. By the time someone needs to visit a public hospital or use health services, many opportunities to address the underlying causes will have been missed.

Health research, data analysis, and public access to health information all have a vital role to play, both in prevention and the continuum of care.

While Australia is rightly proud of its public health system, there are key areas that require improvement. Access to, and affordability of, health services are a challenge for many people. Social inequity continues to contribute to significant preventable illness, and is a key driver of ill-

health. As a society, we are increasingly coming to understand just how important mental health is. And chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, arthritis and diabetes aren't going away. Of course, these chronic conditions have a social gradient, in that populations with fewer material resources and lower incomes experience more chronic conditions – and poorer health outcomes.

“ The pandemic has provided global lessons on the importance of public health and prevention ...

Increased funding is required for preventive health approaches and policies that support education, employment and housing, as well as workforce capacity, to prevent and reduce the burden of illness and support wellbeing.

We need to continue to assess what is working and what is not, so that we can learn, plan and invest appropriately to optimise the health of all South Australians. With this in mind, in 2021-22 SACOSS provided a joint submission to the Review of the Healthcare Act (2008), which examined the 2019 health care governance reforms. We also used our Cover the Basics platform, and pre-election advocacy, to shine a light on some of what is needed for health in SA.



As part of the SA Public Health Consortium, we took some strong calls to action to the state election, which were outlined in a platform of five evidence-based priorities for a healthier state: *Ensuring a Healthier South Australia for Years to Come*. It provided a notable advocacy resource, and was the subject of a public health score card on parties' policies, released ahead of the election.

The Consortium also held a well-attended online pre-election forum in February 2022, where the then-Health Minister Stephen Wade, then-Shadow Minister Chris Picton, the Greens' Tammy Franks and SA-BEST's Connie Bonaros spoke to their parties' responses and key health policies. With some positive commitments in areas such as the establishment of an independent preventive health agency to monitor health inequities, and the need to establish a patient or consumer voice on health, the event proved illuminating, and the Consortium's advocacy won national coverage in *Croakey Health Media*.

Our key shared calls were for:

- 5% of the state health budget to be spent on public health, prevention and promotion
- Increased capacity of the public health workforce
- A floor price for cheap alcohol
- Independent state-wide monitoring for health inequalities
- Healthier environments for children, particularly in relation to healthy diets

We also stood with the Mental Health Coalition of SA (MHCSA) in its call for better support for community mental health support programs. This included co-signing a full-page pre-election open letter in *The Advertiser* in February 2022 highlighting findings that effective community mental health support programs reduce the need for hospitals during a mental health crisis by more than half.

SACOSS also made some additional calls in our own Cover the Basics policy platform, on some areas of ongoing SACOSS advocacy:

- Continued provision of independent health research and data analysis through an adequately-resourced Health Performance Council.

- Better support for people on low incomes with ambulance costs, specifically extending the Ambulance Cover concession for pensioners to all those on equivalent or lower incomes.

We are yet to see action against ambulance costs. But the Health Performance Council (which has faced abolition under both major parties at various points) is set to continue and be strengthened, with its remit to include health inequalities across SA.



In other good news, following the defunding of the Health Consumers Alliance under the previous Government – which left South Australia as the only state without a government-funded independent health consumer body – the new Government will now establish an independent public voice to help fill this critical gap. SACOSS produced a Discussion Paper and a set of Policy Recommendations in 2021 which will support the establishment of this important public voice in our health system. So, while there is more yet to do, the past year has certainly seen some progress in the health arena – which is so critical to every South Australian.

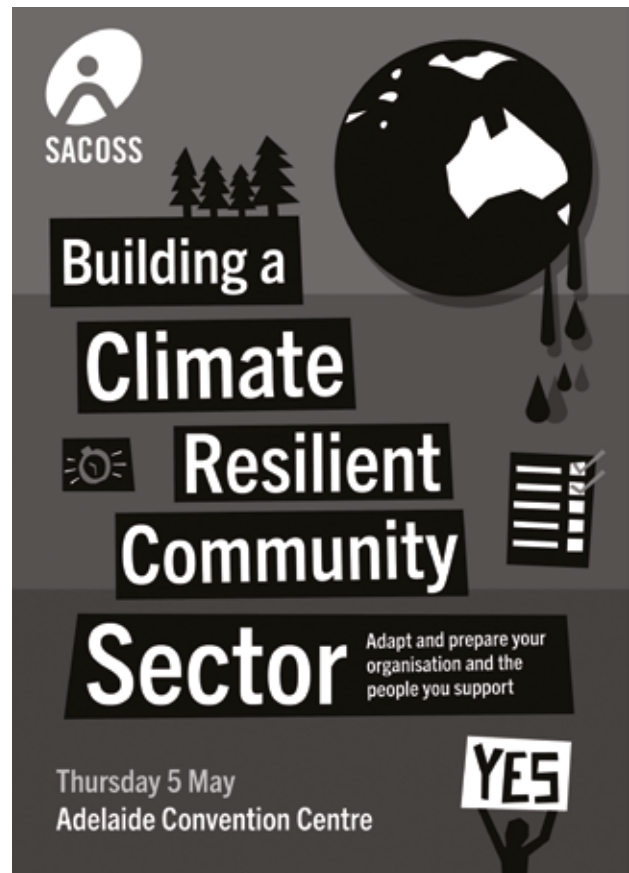
Climate disaster risk-reduction and resilience

Our work to help better equip our sector, and our state, to respond and recover

Climate change is a threat to our health, livelihoods, homes, businesses and infrastructure. We know that the impacts of climate change are not distributed equally, and our planning and responses need to reflect this. So does our sector.

With this in mind, climate disaster risk reduction and resilience has been a key focus of our work in 2021-22. A particular highlight was a capacity building project we delivered in partnership with the Australian Red Cross. Through the project, workshops were provided for the health and community services sector to build the capacity of organisations to reduce and manage climate risks and disasters. The workshops addressed:

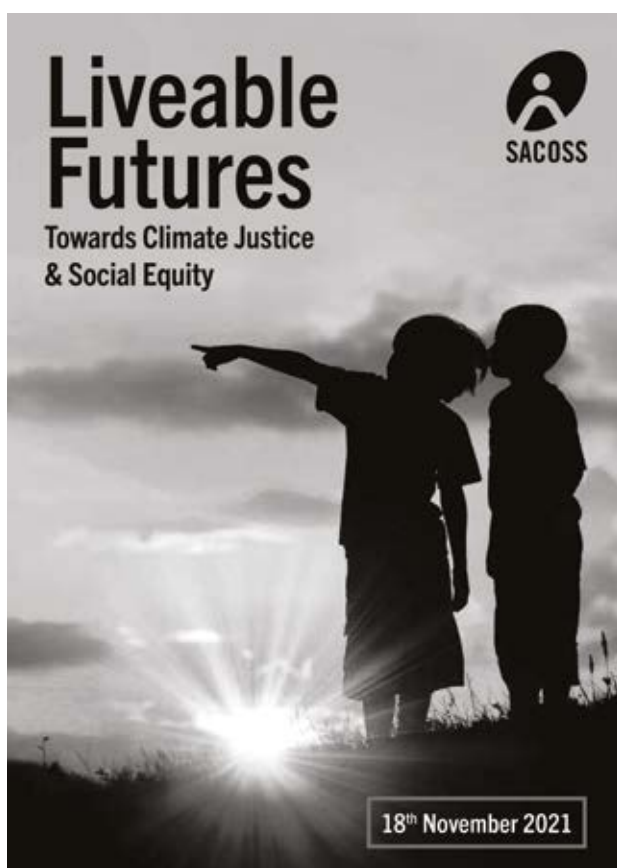
- climate risk for the community services sector
- the impact of emergencies or disasters on the sector and clients
- using risk assessment tools to enhance decision-making
- building preparedness and resilience in organisations, and among clients and communities
- tools, resources and strategies to support effective action.



Then, in May 2022, our *Building a Climate Resilient Community Sector* conference put the spotlight squarely on some of the challenges facing the sector, and how to respond. Attendees learnt the importance of communication, relationship-building and collaboration, along with good governance, to maintain the safety of organisations, their staff and the people they work with across the continuum: before, during and after climate events and disasters.

After the success of our *Liveable Futures* conference in November 2021, which examined climate justice and social equity, the May conference provided a further forum to extend our reach and share expertise in this critical space.

We also delivered a 6-month insurance project in 2021. It explored insurance funding models to maximise access to home, contents and/or vehicle insurance for people on low incomes, to enable people to better recover from natural disasters. Getting underway in June 2021, this





project involved a desktop scan of national and international practices to identify innovative approaches to funding insurance. It included a workshop to debate potential approaches and models, and focus groups with community members to formulate the final recommendations, which included:

- A concessions scheme for home, contents, and vehicle insurance for people on low incomes
- Contents insurance for social housing tenants
- Establishing a not-for-profit mutual microinsurance

The final report from the project provided an excellent vehicle to advance public conversations about the issue of accessible insurance for low-income households and, supported by a presentation at the National Housing Conference in Melbourne in March 2022, the report's findings were widely referenced and reported.

Our advocacy in this space was also reflected in our Cover the Basics platform, together with a call for the state government to establish and fund a disaster resilience and risk reduction fund, to be managed by the People at Risk in Emergencies Action Group. We also advocated for the inclusion of a representative from the NGO health and community services sector on the Premier's Climate Change Council. Although we have not won commitments to date on either, we will continue to highlight the value and need for both these measures.

SACOSS has now been awarded funding for a 2-year project to April 2024 which will also be

“ SACOSS and the Red Cross will reinvigorate coordinated action on the People at Risk in Emergencies Framework for SA

delivered in collaboration with Red Cross. The ultimate purpose of the *Collaborative Action: Addressing the needs of people at risk from climate change, emergencies and disasters* project is improved outcomes for people more at risk as a result of an emergency event/disaster, noting they are significantly over-represented in emergency impact data, and often have a more challenging disaster recovery journey.

SACOSS and the Red Cross will reinvigorate coordinated action on the People at Risk in Emergencies Framework for SA, and develop the Second Implementation Plan. This includes a review and update of the Implementation Plan and work of the People at Risk in Emergencies Action Group to date; review of the membership and ways of working of the Action Group; coordinated delivery of outcomes under the Implementation Plan; engagement and communication within and between the emergency management, health and community services sectors; and a full evaluation at the end of the project.



Families, children, young people and justice

Our work to speak out on some critical issues affecting children, families and young people

SACOSS has long advocated for measures that support and assist children, young people and families to reach their potential and live happy, successful lives. In 2021-22 a key focus was our work as part of the national campaign to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years, from the 10 years it currently is in South Australia, and elsewhere in Australia. The right to a childhood is a basic one, and criminalising any child - and especially children who are under the age of 14 - should have no place in our society.

At a national level, the campaign was led and supported by Change the Record and the Human Rights Law Centre. SACOSS established and co-ordinated the campaign work of the SA-based Raise the Age Coalition, which included more than 20 organisations and supporters. As part of the campaign, we met with a range of policy-makers, including the relevant ministers, shadow ministers and cross-benchers, as well as the Commissioner for Police, the Commissioner for Victims of Crime, and the President of the Police Association, amongst others.

As part of a national petition calling for the age to be raised, South Australia secured almost 12,000 signatures, with this petition handed over to the SA Attorney-General in August 2022. The significant engagement we saw across our networks as a result of the petition, and when we shared campaign content, is testament to the strong sector (and broader) interest and support for this important change.

The call to raise the age was included in our 'Cover the Basics' policy platform, together with a call for more detail and regular public reporting about how South Australia is tracking on meeting its Closing the Gap commitments to reduce the incarceration of Aboriginal people by 30% for young people and 15% for adults by 2031. We know that a key theme of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was that imprisonment should

be a sanction of last resort, yet Aboriginal peoples remain hugely over-represented in the prison population.

Another important area included in our Cover the Basics calls was to provide the option for all young people in state care to access extended support from 18 to at least 21 years. In response to sustained calls across the child services sector for an extension of support to *all* young people leaving care, the previous state government introduced a pilot program that enables young people living in residential care to access carer payments to support them until they reach the age of 21. Previously, carer payments ceased when young people turned 18.

We are encouraged that the new Labor Government has continued this initiative and we hope that it will be extended to a larger group of young people. But we do remain very concerned about the ever-growing number of children and young people in out-of-home-care, and continue to advocate for a comprehensive overhaul of our approaches to supporting children and families so that they can live their best lives.

Another highlight of 2021-22 was our work on the evaluation of the Playford 10 project, that we undertook with funding from the Wyatt Trust, and which ran from April 2018-December 2021. The project explored what is most needed to successfully connect children in low socio-economic status households to ongoing extra-curricular activities - which we know can have a huge impact both for children themselves and in their communities.

We saw first-hand the immense flow-on benefits from providing opportunities for children to discover new interests, learn, and build social skills and connections. We hope that, as well as providing meaningful improvements for the children involved with the program, this work provides constructive groundwork and findings that will assist future similar programs and initiatives.

Our sector

As the peak body for the non-government health and community services sector in South Australia, SACOSS monitors government responses, legislative and regulatory developments that may affect our sector and members, or our ability to perform our role, or have negative impacts for people grappling with poverty or disadvantage. We also look for ways to support our sector, and its people, to do their vital work.

Indexation of State Government grants to the sector

SACOSS has long advocated for appropriate funding for the sector to deliver services and do its important work. This has included highlighting the need for appropriate levels of indexation of state government grants, to ensure that community service organisations do not continually find themselves 'doing more with less' as they strive to meet demand whilst absorbing increased costs.

Our advocacy in the past helped to get government grants to community sector organisations indexed at the same rate as indexation applied for government departments. With recent salary and other cost increases, a better indexation rate is required. This issue was raised with the new SA Treasurer and continues to be an area of SACOSS advocacy. We have called for a minimum of 5.1% indexation for grants, and have been joined in our advocacy by the Australian Services Union and the Working Women's Centre, as well as member organisations.

Impact of efficiency dividends

In the lead-up to the election and the subsequent state budget SACOSS, together with other groups, issued a warning about the 1.7 per cent efficiency dividend in the election costings released by Labor prior to the election, to be applied to a range of departments in 2022-23 against general government sector agencies' net cost of services – with some key exclusions. We flagged concerns that key departments relevant to the community sector's constituents were not quarantined, fearing cuts to programs of concern to us across a range of departments, including the Department of Human Services. We highlighted risks for low income households and people facing poverty.



Community service sector careers platform

SACOSS is acutely aware of the workforce challenges faced by the sector, particularly with significant labour shortages, skills shortages and workforce needs anticipated between now and 2025. Following our earlier work with KPMG and a small sector guidance group to develop a careers platform for the community services sector, we have sought funding to advance this work and deliver 'OneHub' as a workforce support tool for the sector but have not, to date, been successful in gaining further funding.

Portable long service leave for the sector

SACOSS has continued to advocate for the State Government to legislate and provide seed-funding for a portable long service leave scheme for the sector, encompassing people who are employed under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHADS) Award, and included this call in our pre-election policy platform. This change is also being called for by the Australian Services Union SA + NT, which is advocating strongly for this measure as a counterbalance to the fact that many people in the sector are employed as casuals or on fixed-term contracts. This reflects the government funding models with fixed-term contracts, but the result is that employees change jobs regularly and lose entitlements. Victoria, Queensland and the ACT have now introduced portable long service leave schemes where entitlements accumulate with continuous employment across the sector (even if you change employers), and it is time for SA to do likewise. We were encouraged to see a pre-election commitment from SA Labor to look at this, and are working to keep it on the agenda of the new State Labor Government.

Associations Incorporation Act & State Electoral Act changes

Following the former government's work on an electoral amendment bill, which has now lapsed, SACOSS' pre-election policy platform included a call for the next parliament to amend the SA *Electoral Act* to properly define electoral matters and political expenditure, and exempt charities' policy advocacy from Electoral Act disclosure provisions. Currently, the unclear provisions may force charities and peak bodies who want to raise concerns about issues impacting vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians to undertake time-consuming, invasive and irrelevant reporting.

The *Associations Incorporation Act* has long passed without review, until a wholly inadequate internal review was undertaken within the Attorney-General's Department last year, resulting in a fundamentally flawed amendment bill that has also now lapsed. SACOSS continues to call for a broad-based collaborative review to strengthen and modernize the scope and operation of the act, and address problems identified with the existing provisions.

COVID-19 response

Across 2021-22 we continued to keep members and the broader sector up to date on COVID-related news and, in particular, changes to state directions, via COVID updates and our *eBulletin*. We also brought sector views to the table in meetings established by the Department of Human Services as part of its pandemic response. Recognising some of the challenges faced by the sector, we also organised a free webinar for the sector on mandatory vaccine policies for SA NGOs in the health and community services sector.

Civil Society Discussion with the SA Premier

Following the March 2022 election of the new state Labor Government, SACOSS, together with the Conservation Council, Arts Council, SA Unions and the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network, together with key representatives from the different sectors, met with SA Premier Peter Malinauskas to discuss how the new government can work to address inequality, and how we can all work together to establish an agenda for change, drawing on the contribution and knowledge of peak bodies and civil society groups and their constituencies. It was a constructive discussion and, we hope, the beginning of some good work ahead.

Sector surveys & national advocacy

To help advance our advocacy, in late 2021-early 2022 we conducted a South Australian Sector Survey, with a focus on our key Cover the Basics platform areas. It gathered views on a range of issues relevant to our policy advocacy leading up to the state election in March 2022, including on the drivers of poverty and disadvantage, the role of government, and the importance of specific policy areas. SACOSS also continued to support ACOSS sector-advocacy at the national level, including supporting the Australian Community Sector Survey as a major evidence-gathering initiative of the University of NSW in collaboration with COSSes across the country.

Pictured: Craig Wilkins, Conservation Council; Catherine Earl, SACOSS; Premier Peter Malinauskas; Jessica Alice, Arts Council; Dale Beasley, SA Unions; Scott Wilson, SAACCON.





Our networks

SACOSS is part of an important national member network that includes the national Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and Councils of Social Service in all other Australian states and territories.

ACOSS was established in 1956 to work in support of state and territory COSSes as a platform for advocacy at a national level to reduce poverty and inequality.

To this national platform, we bring South Australian insights and perspectives, and on-the-ground feedback from all our South Australian members. Our policy teams also work together and where possible collaborate on areas of shared advocacy.

SACOSS also uses its strong local networks to support and work with other organisations where our interests and concerns intersect. This work can be seen through various events, meetings, joint statements, letters and submissions, and coordinated lobbying and public awareness-raising.

In 2021-22 this has included our support of the Mental Health Coalition's advocacy for community mental health support programs in the lead-up to the recent state election, and our work putting public health in the spotlight as a member of the SA Public Health Consortium. This included jointly hosting a public health forum, and a pre-election joint platform and report card.

We also held a joint event focussed on renters' rights and rental affordability, together with the Anti-

Poverty Network, Better Renting and Shelter SA, and continued to support the national Everybody's Home campaign to fix the housing crisis, as well as Better Renting's Healthy Homes for Renters campaign. The latter complements our own state-based advocacy on minimum energy efficiency standards for rental properties – also an area of ACOSS advocacy nationally. For Anti-Poverty Week 2021, we were glad to be involved in, and support, an event organised by St Vincent de Paul SA with the Anti-Poverty Network SA.

Another key focus has been our work on the national Raise the Age campaign to see the age of criminal responsibility raised to be at least 14 years, as opposed to the ten it is currently in South Australia, among other states and territories. This work has resonated strongly among our membership and supporters, helping to build a growing impetus for change.

Also important have been our efforts to amplify the messages of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its calls for a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Constitution, and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission for the purpose of treaty making and truth-telling. We will continue to support advocacy in this space ahead of the referendum about a Voice which is planned for 2023.

Given SACOSS' significant history and work in the energy space, it will be no surprise that our collaboration in 2021-22 has included a significant amount of joint advocacy on energy (and climate) issues, including a joint letter to Energy Ministers on urgent measures for households experiencing energy stress, and a joint statement on the energy crisis, calling for support for people who are vulnerable, and to boost energy efficiency and the speed of transition to clean energy.

In the COVID context, joint advocacy to National Cabinet with ACOSS and other Councils of Social Service on pandemic payments was an important area, with people on low incomes hit hard by the financial penalties of ceasing work while sick with COVID or required to isolate – particularly casual workers. And, of course, a very significant area of national ongoing advocacy is our continuing drive, together with ACOSS, all other Councils Of Social Service, and many other organisations, for the rate of income support to be raised to an appropriate, liveable level. Our Raise the Rate advocacy will continue!

SACOSS also joined with the South Australian Rainbow Advocacy Alliance (SARAA) and a number of other organisations with deep connections to the LGBTIQ+ community, in supporting submissions and advocacy from Equality Australia in campaigning against the discriminatory functions embedded in the Federal Government's Religious Freedoms Bill.

SACOSS has continued its work with the Rights Resource Network SA and other stakeholders in laying the foundations for the implementation a human rights act, noting again that in the absence of a national act, and amidst a growing proliferation in a range of 'Rights Charters' for certain vulnerable population groups, South Australians would undoubtedly benefit from an overarching Human Rights Act.

Ahead of the state election SACOSS joined other South Australian businesses, organisations and individuals to advocate for powerful policies that protect our community, economy and environment from climate change impacts by endorsing the South Australians for Climate Action Statement. SACOSS is still pushing for a seat for the sector at the Premier's Climate Change Council.

“ SACOSS also uses its strong local networks to support and work with other organisations where our interests and concerns intersect

We have continued our sector leadership in relation to implementation of the Government's NFP Funding Rules and Guidelines, and to support this we co-chair the Not-for-Profit Community of Practice with the Department of Treasury and Finance. Additionally, we serve as members on the Department's Industry Advisory Group.

We have continued our support for the SA Coalition for Welfare Rights, who remain determined to ensure that people who are struggling with both



the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the SA Civil and Administrative Tribunal have access to advocacy and support to ensure they are treated fairly and are able to put their best foot forward in tribunal processes.

Similarly, we continue to support the Anti-Poverty Network SA with access to our facilities, while they in turn assist by informing our policy positions and linking SACOSS, and sometimes the media, with people who have life experiences directly relevant to our mission. APNSA is committed to the ideal of an adequate, fair, non-judgmental welfare system. Their aim is to promote a safety-net that properly protects low income and vulnerable people; that treats people with respect, instead of punishing and micro-managing them; and allows them to fully participate in economic, community, and public life.

Additionally, SACOSS continues to send representatives into a number of other key forums which are focused on a diverse range of issues including gambling and the harm that is associated with it; digital access and inclusion; the wellbeing of children leaving care; access to dental services and free dental care; safeguarding our elders and other vulnerable adults; the training and development of welfare professionals; implementation of the NDIS; and inclusive access to court services. There is much to do, but we do what we can to give voice to the issues we and our members see. Our thanks go to the many groups we engage with, and the members and staff who contribute in these important contexts.

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

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 2021-22 are listed below. Across 2021-22 SACOSS also produced and updated 22 policy briefs on issues across our Cover the Basics policy platform.

REPORTS, BRIEFINGS & RESOURCES

July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual SACOSS Briefing to the Minister for Energy (2020/2021) • Access to Energy Programs for Low Income Households • State Budget Analysis 2021-22
August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of Living Update, June Quarter 2021
October 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State of Concessions in South Australia
November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election Platform: Public Health Consortium • Fact Sheet: Digital Inclusion in SA - Regional Data • SACOSS 74th Annual Report 2021-22
February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of Living Update, December Quarter 2021 - Rental Affordability • Protecting the Basics: Insurance Access for People on Low incomes at Risk from Climate Emergencies • Cover the Basics: Policy Prescriptions for 2022+
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SACOSS Election Report Card
April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need Help Getting Connected? - Tailored Brochures for 3 Regional Areas • Getting Connected in Peterborough: Digital Inclusion Solutions • Getting Connected in Karoonda East Murray: Digital Inclusion Solutions • Getting Connected in the Yorke Peninsula Council Area: Digital Inclusion Solutions • Fact Sheet: Digital Inclusion in South Australia: Yorke and Mid-North
May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SACOSS Pre-Budget Briefing Note
June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Budget Snapshot 2022-23 • State Budget Analysis 2022-23

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 vulnerable and disadvantaged people. 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 2021-22 are listed below.

SUBMISSIONS

July 2021

- SACOSS Submission on Privatisation of Public Services in South Australia
- SACOSS Supplementary Submission on Privatisation of Public Housing
- Submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Privatisation of Public Services
- Joint Submission on the Liquor Licensing Act 1997 - Proposed Amendments
- Joint Submission to the Consultation on the Draft Tobacco Control Strategy 2021 - 2025

August 2021

- Joint Submission in Response to the Review of the Health Care Act 2008
- Submission in response to the Discussion Paper: Raising the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility
- Joint Submission to the Liquor Licensing (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2021

September 2021

- Submission to the Australian Energy Regulator on the Rate of Return Omnibus Papers
- Submission to the Department for Energy and Mining on its Consultation on Proposed Amendments to Customer Payment under the Remote Area Energy Supply Scheme
- Submission to the Department for Energy and Mining on the Consultation on the Electricity (General) (Technical Standards) Variation Regulations 2021

October 2021

- SACOSS Submission to the Department for Environment and Water on Future Urban Water Directions

November 2021

- Submission to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) on the Default Market Offer Methodology for 2022-23 Options Paper

February 2022

- Submission to the AER on its Draft Consumer Vulnerability Strategy
- Submission to the Department for Energy and Mining on the acceleration of the smart meter roll out in SA
- Submission to the Department for Energy and Mining on its Electricity Licensing Review
- Submission on the Australian Energy Market Operator's Draft Integrated System Plan

March 2022

- Submission to ESCOSA on the Off-grid Energy Consumer Protection Framework Review

April 2022

- Submission to the Legislative Review Committee on the Electricity (General) (Payment Condition) Variation Regulations 2021

May 2022

- Submission to the Australian Energy Regulator on SA Power Networks' cost pass through application

June 2022

- Submission to ESCOSA on Cowell Electric Supply Pty Ltd licence amendment: Proposed prepayment by default consumer protections Draft Decision
- Joint Councils of Social Service letter to Energy Ministers on Urgent Measures for Households Experiencing Energy Stress
- Joint Statement on the Energy Crisis: Support the Vulnerable, Boost Energy Efficiency and Speed Transition to Clean Energy



Pictured above: SACOSS CEO Ross Womersley with Ross Garnaut onscreen

SACOSS events

Liveable Futures Conference

With the health and community services sector speaking out for fair, fast and inclusive climate action, and various organisations stepping up through measures such as Climate Active certification, SACOSS tackled some of the big questions around climate justice and social equity at our *Liveable Futures* conference on 18 November 2021.

We looked at not only the work of community organisations but the move to net zero; energy and climate justice; green infrastructure and social equity; redesigning an accessible, affordable transport system; water justice; and the future of gas.

There are new opportunities to redesign our residential, transport, water, community and other industry sectors to ensure a decarbonised economy is inclusive and does not leave people behind. The *Liveable Futures* conference explored how the low carbon transition can address existing disadvantage by including the experiences and voices of those most impacted by climate change.

We asked: what does an equitable future look like and how can the social services sector work closely with government and industry to ensure a sustainable future for all in our community? With an opening keynote from renowned Australian economist Ross Garnaut, and a range of other great speakers, the *Liveable Futures* conference proved a highlight to our year, setting the scene for some of our other climate change and disaster resilience work.

Building a Climate Resilient Community Sector Conference

Recent floods in Queensland and NSW, and in our own state's north, really brought home the need for all community service organisations to build response and recovery into part of their everyday work. With eyes on the future, our *Building a Climate Resilient Community Sector* conference on 5 May 2022 provided an important opportunity for our sector to learn more about strategies to prepare, adapt and respond to climate emergencies and disasters.

Held at the Adelaide Convention Centre, the conference was funded under the Disaster Risk Reduction Grant Program supported by the state and federal government. It was also supported by AnglicareSA and Centacare Catholic Country SA, and featured a range of great speakers from the community sector and beyond. SACOSS partnered with Red Cross and the SA Fire and Emergency Services Commission to organise and deliver the Conference, which was complemented by a range of disaster risk reduction workshops across August to November 2021.



Disaster Risk Reduction Workshops

We know that while climate change is increasing the intensity and frequency of bushfires and extreme weather events, the impacts are not felt by all people equally. People experiencing poverty, poor health, frailty and disability bear the greatest burden and are most at risk. To help the health and community services sector gain a greater understanding of the risks, and the tools available, SACOSS held 9 workshops in 2021, in partnership with Red Cross, in a range of metropolitan and regional areas. Tailored workshops were provided for small organisations, large organisations, aged care, health, disability, and housing and homelessness service providers. The regional locations were the Eyre Peninsula, Limestone Coast, and Mount Barker and Adelaide Hills region.

The workshop format enabled participants to share their experiences, which provided valuable learning for other participants, with some of those experiences being shared in other sessions. At the conclusion of the workshops, participants also identified a number of actions they could take upon returning to their workplace to begin the process of improving the emergency preparedness and climate resilience of their organisation. The workshops provided a forum for some important conversations, and significant insights into the challenges, as well as what's needed both at an organisational level and in terms of the broader collaborations and connections required to better equip communities – and the organisations that serve them – to prepare and respond to our changing climate and the emergencies it can contribute to.

Regional Roundtables

On 2 August 2021 we were delighted to be in Murray Bridge for our Regional Roundtable with a spotlight on the Hills and Mallee region. The Roundtable, which also functioned as a regional SACOSS Policy Council meeting, provided an excellent opportunity to cast a light on regional issues – and the regional face of statewide ones. Our other Regional Roundtable for 2021-22 was held in Kadina on

4 April 2022, and provided a forum for the launch of a range of digital inclusion regional resources, as well as a range of useful discussions. Both events included in-person and online attendance and provided a reminder of the shared nature of many challenges our regions face.

Leadership Networking & Sector Capacity Building

Our leadership networking events continued this year, with an emerging leaders lunch held on 17 August, and leadership networking events for CEOs and key leaders from member organisations held in October 2021 and April 2022. With an eye to superannuation changes on the horizon, SACOSS also organised a session with HESTA to help members get across the changes. The session was tailored especially for people and culture professionals and payroll managers, and held on 12 May 2022.

Responses to the COVID pandemic and associated government orders were also a key consideration for our sector in 2021-22. In response to a need in the area, SACOSS organised a free webinar on 9 December for member organisations on managing mandatory vaccine policies. The webinar was specifically aimed at SA health and community service NGOs in South Australia and was delivered by specialist community sector legal service provider Justice Connect.

Treasurer's Breakfasts

Due to state budget timings, we had two Treasurer's Breakfasts across 2021-22, the first on 1 July 2021, with then-Treasurer Rob Lucas, which moved to an online format in the COVID context, and the second, with fresh new Treasurer Stephen Mullighan on 8 June 2022, not long after the March 2022 state election and change of government. To help our sector get across the state budget's changes (and to gain quick member feedback), SACOSS also, as per tradition, held a Post-Budget Sector Briefing on 2 June 2022, right after the state budget was handed down.



Annual Thank You Breakfast

Saying thank you is important at any time of year, but the approach of the festive season and new year provides a great opportunity for us to catch up with friends and colleagues across the sector, and beyond it. Our Annual Thank You Breakfast on 9 December 2021 was, as always, well attended, and it was great to be joined not only by our member organisations, but also a number of members of parliament and some of the other key folk we work and liaise with across the year, both in government and from other agencies.

‘On the Couch’ Events

In the lead-up to the state election, we held two ‘On the Couch’ events early in 2022, one with then -Opposition Leader (later to be Premier) Peter Malinauskas on 22 February, and one with then-Human Services Minister Michelle Lensink on 2 March. The premier of the day, Steven Marshall, was also invited but did not join us, and Human Services Shadow Nat Cook (later Minister) was prevented from attending as planned due to unavoidable circumstances, but sent us a tailored video address to cover issues of interest and concern.

Due to the COVID context at the time, these events were held online as webinars – also making them more broadly accessible – with our guests joining us at the SACOSSS office for a Q&A with our CEO Ross Womersley on key issues in the lead-up to the state election, with a particular focus on our ‘Cover the Basics’ policy calls. Our own ‘On the Couch’ events complemented other pre-election forums, including the Public Health Forum we jointly held as part of the SA Public Health Consortium.

Housing the Australian Nation Luncheon and AGM

To help promote discussion on the housing solutions South Australia needs for the future, for our 2021 AGM on 25 November we held a luncheon with guest speaker Peter Mares giving a special presentation *Housing the Australian Nation: learning from the past to fix the future*. The title is a reference to a pamphlet from 1942 that helped argue the case for Australia’s post-war investment in public housing, by pointing to the primary role of housing in wellbeing, and to the market failure in providing decent affordable homes for people on the lowest incomes. Tickets sold like hot cakes, and the event proved both enjoyable and insightful, providing a great opportunity to highlight our call for a significant investment in public housing as a key election priority.

Housing Affordability and Renters’ Rights Forum

With the state election looming just a bit over a month away, on 8 February 2022 we held a Housing Affordability and Renters’ Rights Forum. Originally conceived as an in-person event focussed on the West Torrens electorate, where there are a high proportion of renters, it provided an important opportunity to hear and share issues of concern to renters as well as hearing from local candidates. Moving to an online forum, the attendance broadened, but the interest remained acute, in what was a highly topical pre-election issue. We were delighted to hold this event in conjunction with the Anti-Poverty Network SA, Shelter SA, and Better Renting, also advertising it locally in the West Torrens area, and connecting with audiences beyond our usually remit thanks to these alliances.



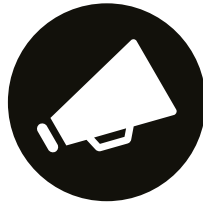
Strategic Plan 2022-2027

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 & disadvantage



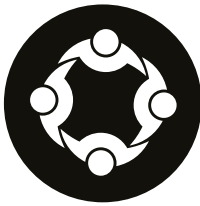
Lead Awareness

Identifying, exposing & raising awareness about poverty and disadvantage

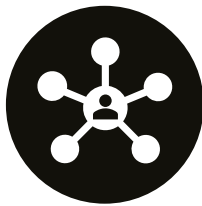


Change the Narrative

Challenging poverty stereotypes & amplifying the voices of people who experience poverty and/or disadvantage



Mobilise for justice, opportunity and shared wealth



Build Support & Influence

Engaging others to become allies in influencing decision-makers



Promote & Inform

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



Foster Collaborative Action

Building alignment & shared purpose in the community services sector

CULTIVATING AN INFORMED & THRIVING COMMUNITY SECTOR



SACOSS Board Members 2021–22

The SACOSS Board is responsible for the governance of the organisation

SACOSS BOARD MEMBERS 2021-22		
BOARD POSITION	NAME	YEAR TERM EXPIRES (NOVEMBER)
Chair	David Panter	2022
Treasurer	Emma Crosby	2023
Member (co-opted)	Cheryl Axelby	2023
Member	Nicole Chaplin	2023
Member	Dr Jen Cleary	2022
Member	Nancy Penna	2022
Member (co-opted)	Sabina Schaare	2022
Member	Pam Simmons	2023
Member	Robyn Sutherland	2022

Lifetimes of achievement

Over SACOSS’ 75-year history, many people have made significant contributions to our organisation and its objectives. Of these, some of the most outstanding have been made life members. Read on for a list of everyone who has been awarded life membership over our 75 years...

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



A new life member of SACOSS

We were delighted to present Anthea Pavy with life membership of SACOSS at the Treasurer’s Breakfast on 8 June 2022. A longstanding member of the SACOSS Policy Council, Anthea has done outstanding work in support of SACOSS, our advocacy around poverty eradication, and the vital role of regional services, over an impressive career. Her contributions to the sector, SACOSS, and of course the community, provide a shining example. Thank you to Anthea!

Pictured (L-R): Fran Baum, Rebecca Anasson, Mark Henley, Anthea Pavy, Ross Womersley, Natalie Wade, David Panter, Cheryl Axleby.

SACOSS Policy Council Members 2021–22

The SACOSS Policy Council helps to plan and develop key areas of social policy development work.

POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERS 2021-22		
CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	PERSON ELECTED	ORGANISATION
Chairperson	David Panter	SACOSS Board/Minda
Peak Body	Jacqui d'Sylva	Community Centres SA
	Geoff Harris	Mental Health Coalition of SA
	Andrea Konigsmann	Child and Family Focus SA (to Dec 2021)
	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
	Luke Westenberg	Community Housing Council SA
	Shelagh Woods	Aboriginal Health Council SA
Non-metro	Shane Maddocks	ac.care
	Harry Randhawa	Uniting Country SA
Large NGO	Libby Craft	Uniting SA (to Sept 2021)
	Susan Errington	Legal Services Commission of SA
	Sarah Watson	Uniting Communities (to Nov 2021)
	Tania Manser	Sonder
	Leigh Garrett	OARS
	Kyp Boucher	Life Without Barriers (to Sept 2021)
	Simone Mather	Life Without Barriers (from Nov 2021)
	Small NGO	Michelle Adams
Nicole Chaplin		St John's Youth Service
Abbey Kendall		Working Women's Centre SA
Shona Reid		Reconciliation SA (to Nov 2021)
Casual Vacancy		(from Nov 2021)
CALD	Sandra Dzafic	Australian Refugee Association (to Nov 2021)
	Deb Stringer	Australian Refugee Association (from Jan 2022)
	Casual Vacancy	
Aboriginal	Casual Vacancy (x2)	
Individual Member	Kym Davey	(From Nov 2021)
	Linley Shine	
	Karen Smith	
	Casual Vacancy	

Policy Council Meetings & Regional Roundtables

Eight Policy Council meetings were held in 2021-22, with the majority of meetings being a hybrid of online and in-person attendance. Meeting agendas included a focus on human rights, sector workforce issues, health, poverty, mental health, and a range of other SACOSS policy and advocacy priorities that formed the SACOSS 'Cover the Basics' policy platform, released in the lead-up to the 2022 state election. Two Regional Roundtables were held: in Murray Bridge in August 2021, and Kadina in April 2022.

Both were well attended by a cross-section of the community service sector, local government and some state government agencies, along with our Board and Policy Council members.

What we heard in those consultations has informed SACOSS policy and advocacy work, particularly in relation to housing and digital inclusion. We are now working with regional members and stakeholders to develop a plan to address some of the key issues for regional South Australians.

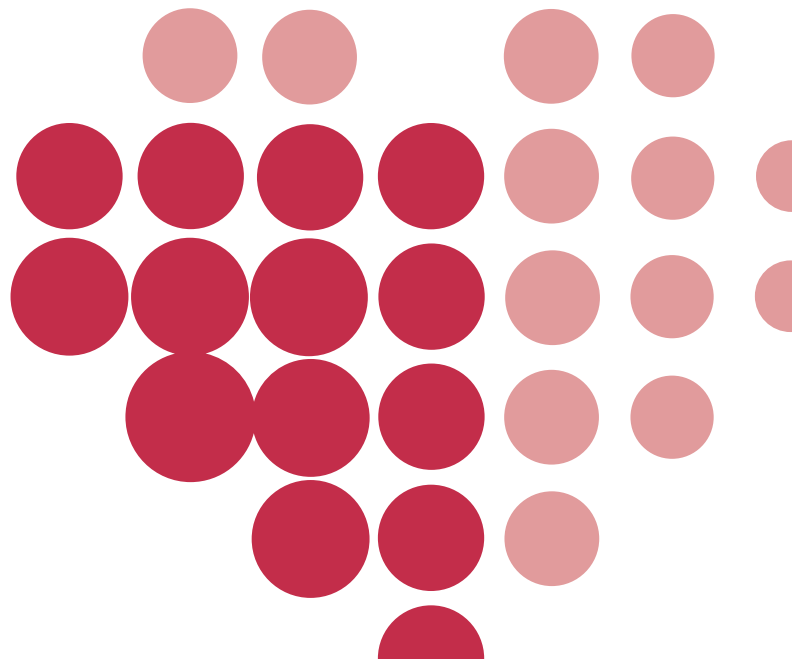


Our Member Organisations 2021–22

Aboriginal Community Care (SA)
 Anglican Community Care
 Anglicare SA
 Anti-Poverty Network SA
 Australian Association of Social Workers
 Australian Health Promotion Association SA
 Australian Migrant Resource Centre
 Australian Red Cross (SA Division)
 Australian Refugee Association
 Australian Services Union
 Baptist Care SA
 Barkuma Inc
 Brain Injury SA
 Carers SA
 CareWorks SA
 Centacare Catholic Country SA
 Centacare Catholic Family Services
 Child and Family Focus SA
 City of Onkaparinga
 Combined Charities*
 Community Business Bureau
 Community Centres SA
 Community Housing Council of SA
 Community Justice Services SA
 Community Living Australia
 Community Living Project
 Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers - SA
 Council On The Ageing SA
 CREATE Foundation
 Disability Living
 Disability Rights Advocacy Service
 ECH Inc
 Embolden SA
 Enhanced Lifestyles
 Family Drug Support
 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
 Guide Dogs SA/NT
 Hepatitis SA
 Hesta Super Fund*
 Hutt Street Centre
 Julia Farr Association
 Junction Australia
 Justice for Refugees SA
 JusticeNet SA
 Kornar Winmil Yunti
 Legal Services Commission of SA
 LELAN
 Life Without Barriers
 Louisa DaCosta Trust
 Lutheran Community Care
 MarionLIFE Community Services
 Mental Health Coalition of SA

Minda
 Mission Australia - SA Region
 MoneyMob Talkabout
 Neami National
 Non Profit Training*
 OARS Community Transitions
 Occupational Therapy Australia
 Office of the Guardian for Children & Young People
 Reconciliation South Australia
 Relationships Australia South Australia
 Save the Children Australia
 Second Chances SA
 SIN
 Skylight Mental Health
 Sonder
 South Australian Financial Counsellors Association
 SA Network of Drug and Alcohol Services
 St John's Youth Services
 St Vincent de Paul Society (SA)
 STTARS - Survivors of Torture & Trauma
 SYC
 Terandi*
 The Broughton Art Society
 The Growing Space
 The Salvation Army
 The Smith Family
 The Wyatt Trust
 Uniting Communities
 Uniting Country SA
 UnitingCare SA
 UnitingCare Wesley Bowden
 UnitingSA
 Volunteering SA&NT
 Women's Safety Services
 Working Women's Centre SA Inc

**Associate Members*



Secretariat 2021–22

Ross Womersley
Chief Executive Officer

Policy & Research

Dr Catherine Earl
Director of Policy & Advocacy

Dr Greg Ogle
Senior Policy & Research Analyst (Economic Issues)

Dr Maureen Boyle
Senior Policy Officer (Energy) (to May 2022)

Rebecca Law
Senior Policy Officer (Water)

Georgina Morris
Policy Officer (Energy & Water)

Sue Tilley
Senior Policy Officer (Health, Aboriginal Social Justice, Child & Family Wellbeing)

Kathy Mickan
Senior Policy Officer (Disaster Resilience)

Dr Shawna Marks
Policy Officer

Dr Toby Freeman
Policy Officer (to May 2022)

Isobel Montgomery
Policy Officer (to June 2022)

Communications

Eva O'Driscoll
Communications Manager

Trevor Byrne
Digital Communications & Engagement Officer (from Nov 2021)

Events & Membership

Angela Gardner
Membership & Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator (to April 2022)

Amy Swinburne
Membership & Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator (from April 2022)

Finance & Administration

Lucy Goodall
Finance & Administration Assistant

Erin Kingisepp
Corporate Services Manager

External committees

Representatives and nominees of SACOSS sat on the following boards and committees in 2020-21. SACOSS thanks them all 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 Polices Research Translation Committee
- Adult Safeguarding Advisory Group

Catherine Earl

- Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity PhD Advisory Group
- Resilience Recovery and Engagement Committee

Greg Ogle

- Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) Consumer Consultative Forum (6 months – shared with Georgina Morris)

Maureen Boyle

- ElectraNet Consumer Advisory Panel
- SA Power Networks Tariff Working Group

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
- ACMA Consumer Consultative Forum (6 months – shared with Greg Ogle)

Sue Tilley

- SA Public Health Consortium
- National Raise the Age Campaign Coalition

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

It has been a big year for SACOSS with the launch of our 'Cover the Basics' campaign and the many events and activities in the lead-up to, and following from, the state election. Our Cover the Basics campaign identified a range of areas where important life fundamentals are not currently being met, and included key recommendations for South Australia's political leaders to act on. Early on, we identified that we would need additional resourcing to make the campaign a success and so we made temporary provisions for additional campaign capacity in the team. Additional amounts were also required in developing an engaging website and in promoting the campaign.

During the year the Board reflected on the mission and role of SACOSS and subsequently made small but significant adjustments in refreshing our Strategic Plan. It is important to secure SACOSS' continuing capacity to advocate for needed change, which requires lines of income that maintain our independence. This remains a long-term challenge. A copy of the refreshed plan can be viewed on our website or on page 36.

Grant incomes remained steady although these did come from different sources in FY22, with major and minor projects in the disaster risk reduction space funded by SAFECOM. Our work on this issue was well received and continues on in FY23 with a growing focus on the implications of climate change.

Expenditure on consultancy fees was reduced in FY22. While in FY21 we had been successful in obtaining funding for the development of a workforce platform, which involved us working with several specialist consultants, ongoing funding has not eventuated.

Travel and Accommodation expenses fell again this year with both COVID impacts and the end of current funding for the National Consumer Roundtable on Energy, though we hope to continue our involvement in the work going forward.

A number of shorter-term projects during the year saw our staffing numbers increase to 16 people at one point – almost all part-time. This made a full house for SACOSS, and we were pleased to have this extra capacity on board. However, this had fallen back to 13 staff at 30 June 2022.

In FY21 the Board agreed to diversify our current investment holdings with the purchase of some equities, and in FY22 we continued to modestly expand our investment holdings and reduce some the funds held on cash deposit, following many years of very low interest returns. Our equity investment



choices have been made with institutions that are responsible ethical investment leaders. Unfortunately, as a result of falls across the equities market both here and internationally, we have recognised a loss on the revaluation of those investments of \$78,614 as at 30 June 2022. While this is a very disappointing result, we have a long-term investment outlook and remain confident in our investment choices.

On a more positive note, Marjorie Black House was revalued in FY22, which saw a boost to our balance sheet of \$1.5m. It has been three years since the land and building was previously revalued and during that time the property market has seen steep increases in Adelaide. General repairs and maintenance have been undertaken to the building during this period, as well as an upgrade to the main SACOSS bathroom to make the facilities more accessible. This upgrade was facilitated by a small and welcome grant from the Department of Human Services.

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.

In closing, can I again note my appreciation for the terrific support from the SACOSS team and especially Erin Kingisepp as SACOSS' Corporate Services Manager. My thanks also extend to all my fellow Board members, and especially those who have volunteered on our Finance, Audit and Investment Committee. Naturally our work would not be possible without a range of funders and members – all of whom see purpose in our mission 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 2022

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE INC.

	2022 \$	2021 \$
INCOME		
Core Grant	488,961	477,035
Grants - Other	914,927	923,135
Contributions - Members	110,594	113,088
Event Income	107,098	99,507
Other Operating Income	78,401	167,435
Interest & Investment Income	29,831	19,450
JobKeeper Subsidy	-	123,000
Total Income	1,729,811	1,922,651
EXPENSES		
Advertising & Promotion	22,684	5,338
Equipment	4,401	7,641
Event Expenses	63,991	53,338
IT Expenses	26,231	21,037
Consultancy Fees	112,197	315,268
Depreciation	38,018	32,758
Insurance	17,446	15,250
Reference Material	16,496	16,025
Office Costs	29,083	77,678
Professional Services	25,122	15,875
Salary & Wages	1,402,990	1,239,911
Other Expenses	28,071	37,223
Total Expenses	1,786,731	1,837,346
Net Current Year Surplus/(Deficit) Before Fair Value Movement	(56,919)	85,305
OTHER INCOME		
Gain/(Loss) on Revaluation of Financial Assets	(78,614)	16,306
Gain/(Loss) on Revaluation of Property	1,602,000	-
Total Comprehensive Income/(Loss) for the Year	1,466,467	101,611

The SACOSS 2022 Audited Financial Report with accompanying notes is available on our website.

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2022

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE INC.

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Cash Assets	548,205	1,003,224
Receivables & Accruals	110,465	44,869
Total Current Assets	658,671	1,048,093
Non-Current Assets		
Financial Assets	412,692	266,306
Property, Plant & Equipment	3,300,619	1,710,823
Total Non-Current Assets	3,713,311	1,977,129
Total Assets	4,371,982	3,025,222
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Creditors & Accruals	190,727	166,695
Employee Provisions	204,561	201,254
Other Liabilities	47,002	199,688
Total Current Liabilities	442,291	567,637
Non-Current Liabilities		
Employee Provisions	11,871	6,232
Total Liabilities	454,162	573,869
Net Assets	3,917,821	2,451,353
EQUITY		
Retained Surplus	689,609	825,142
Reserves	3,228,211	1,626,211
Total Equity	3,917,821	2,451,353

The SACOSS 2022 Audited Financial Report with accompanying notes is available on our website.

Our partners

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

PEAK FUNDING



ENERGY & WATER ADVOCACY



DISASTER RESILIENCE PROJECTS



PLAYFORD 10 PROJECT (PROGRAM EVALUATION) & UNDERSTANDING THE POVERTY SYSTEM IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA



GENERAL SPONSORSHIP



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. Also, the organisations that sponsored our conferences and AGM Lunch: the Local Government Association of SA, Energy & Water Ombudsman SA, Centacare Catholic Country SA, Essential Services Commission of South Australia, Australian Gas Infrastructure Group, Baptist Care SA, AnglicareSA and Unity Housing.

A BRANSON EDITH CASELY
L. CORR HEATHER CROSBY
LLEEN FITZPATRICK GAEL
RETT C.W. GOYDER KAREN
NE HALSEY MARK HENLEY
ARET HUNTER ELIZABETH
R JACOBS MURRAY JONES
WENDY MALYCHA GERARD
HELL ELIZABETH MORGAN
GE DAVID PANTER LANGE
E REED YVE REPIN JUDITH
PEL PAM SIMMONS HELEN
MPSON PETER D. TRAVERS
STAFF J.I.N. WINTER ROSS
Y I.G. YATES K.F. NEWMAN



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 [@sacoss](https://twitter.com/sacoss)

 linkedin.com/company/SACOSS

SACOSS acknowledges traditional owners of country throughout South Australia, and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to elders past, present and future.