

SACOSS

NEWS

Justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians

Child Protection Edition

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Autumn 2016



SACOSS

South Australian Council
of Social Service

As the peak non-government representative body for the health and community services sector in South Australia, the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS) believes in justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians.

For information on membership, we invite you to visit our website or phone us.

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SACOSS News

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Editorial

Ross Womersley
Executive Director, SACOSS

My, how time flies. Here we are, it's almost April already and there's another year behind us. This year we will have a federal election and we have been having extended discussions with our colleagues at ACOSS and across the other COSSs to discern what some of our key asks are going to be.

I have to say we still haven't recovered from the last two federal budgets and indeed some of the issues and consequences are yet to be felt. We did get the measures that would have resulted in young people being unable to access Newstart allowance for six months down to a newly proposed four weeks. Of course four weeks without having anything to live on is still unacceptable. BUT, it doesn't sound nearly as bad to the public as six months did, so there is still some considerable risk that the measure may get passed because it's seen as being so much better. Of course we are continuing to ask the cross bench senators and the opposition to block this along with some of the harshest of other remaining measures from that budget.

It's also important to remember that by the time the 2015 Federal budget was delivered almost \$80 billion had been cut from future funding for the states relating to education, health and housing. Closer to home ACOSS calculated that at least \$1 billion in cuts had been made to vital community services for the people in greatest need around the country. Now these cuts have tended to fly under the public radar but they are real. This includes cuts to services for people experiencing financial crisis or family breakdown, children at risk, vulnerable young people, new mothers and babies, people facing eviction and homelessness, carers in need of respite, those struggling with drug and alcohol addictions, and those with mental health problems. Included in these cuts was \$500 million specifically targeted toward support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and programs.

Our challenge both as a sector and as people worried for members of our community facing injustice, vulnerability and disadvantage, is still to explain that this in fact is real and why this is so problematic.

So in the lead up to this federal election what will the COSS network be asking for? There are probably at least eight areas we want whoever forms government to attend to. This includes:

- ensuring that the government has the revenue it needs to ensure the vital services we all want as a community can actually be provided;
- increasing opportunities for participation in work in order to ensure we reduce the experience of poverty that only results from having access to a 'living wage';
- Reducing child poverty by reforming the family payment system;
- Improving access to affordable housing;
- Investing in, and promoting prevention throughout our health system including work on ensuring access to affordable oral health;
- Ensuring universal access to high quality education and enhanced access to early childhood services;
- Addressing energy poverty and the disproportional impacts on people on low incomes from climate change; and last but far from least
- Supporting an effective and innovative community services sector.

While addressing these issues will be vital across Australia, in SA we have some acute and particular interests.

Regrettably, we now have the highest levels of unemployment and underemployment in Australia and realistically, this seems likely to continue for some time to come.

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This is exactly why this year, our budget submission to the state government was so heavily focused on addressing this particular issue. Moreover, it is what we should also be working to ensure our federal representatives appreciate as we move towards this next election.

We need your help to ensure whichever party gets to form government appreciates that without urgent action from both state and federal governments, the particular challenges we face as a state will potentially continue unabated.

We have no choice and I ask that you do your level best to ensure all our candidates really do understand why this is such a fundamental issue – for all the young people and people who live with a disability who cannot currently find their way into the labour force, for the long term unemployed who fail to get the support or chances they need to find work, and for the people who might have lost their jobs in their fifties and who largely as a

result of discrimination are faced with years of living on a Newstart Allowance while waiting to become eligible for the aged pension.

While a federal election is on the way, closer to home we have some major challenges that flow out of our child protection system. At the end of last year we worked with a series of partners - CAFWA, SNAICC, UniSA's ACCP and DECD to host a workshop that laid out some of the challenges and encouraged us to remember that child protection is the business of all of us. In this edition we build on that discussion.

In 2016 let's work to get all these circumstances redressed.

In solidarity,



Ross

Reforms in child protection: challenges and opportunities



Helen Buckley

Associate Professor, School of Social Work & Social Policy, Trinity College - Dublin

Providers of social care have always understood the complexity involved in working with vulnerable children and families. However, to those outside the sector, the work seems a lot simpler than it is in reality. Therefore when a scandal emerges, it is usually followed by outrage on the part of the public, swiftly followed by political undertakings to ensure that such incidents never re-occur.

The most predictable response by a government is the establishment of an inquiry. Such a process can be beneficial in its propensity to raise awareness about social problems including child harm; it can also draw investment into the sector. However, it also carries the risk of potentially undermining the capacity of the system to do its work by overburdening it with regulation and bureaucracy. It can also contribute to unrealistic expectations. A positive or negative impact will depend crucially on the type of reforms it puts forward. Governments, having commissioned an inquiry, will generally be reluctant to reject recommendations, so inquiry teams have a clear responsibility to think through the consequences of their proposals.

Perverse and intelligent reforms

Reforms in child protection and welfare work could be divided into two categories: perverse and intelligent. The former are those which create a work environment that contains more obstacles than supports to improvement.

Typically, they respond to minor problems with major recommendations, or ignore the viewpoint of key stakeholders including professionals and families. They often pay lip service to unfocused concepts such as 'prevention' or 'early intervention' without properly defining what is intended. They can sometimes grow rather than address problems if they fail to address its root cause and simply add on more of the same, for example by expanding the child protection service without addressing the reason why it is under pressure. By excessively streamlining services, they can alienate communities and create silos. They may propose new measures without accurately assessing the capacity

of the system to produce quality services. Finally, they may fail to predict, acknowledge or make provision for unintended negative consequences.

Intelligent reforms, on the other hand, are those that are based on different types of evidence to show that their outcomes will be beneficial. They are generally few in number. They should be linked with the matters arising from the inquiry, and they should be capable of addressing not just the failings in the system under scrutiny but the broader social issues that affect children and families. Intelligent reforms should go beneath the surface of policy and procedure and pay attention to processes that affect the quality of management and practice, such as support structures, discriminatory practices, staff stability, power differentials and relationship issues.

They should promote learning and be grounded in logic, that is, the impact that they will have should be clearly and objectively anticipated and they should have a self-audit function that may pre-empt the need for further inquiries.

Implementation of reform

Organisations, including statutory and non-governmental sectors need to face certain challenges when implementing reform. Primarily, there needs to be clarity about precisely whose responsibility it is to effect the changes, whether it is intended to be state-wide, confined to particular sectors or certain organisations. There needs to be a clear understanding about the difference between addressing and implementing change.

The former consists of issuing policy or guidance, the latter means ensuring that it is put into operation at the frontline. The business of auditing compliance with the reform process needs to be allocated and followed up consistently, and linked to this, there needs to be a clear vision of full implementation – what it will look like and how long it is expected to take.

Challenges to the reform process can arise in certain circumstances, for instance where it involves more than one organisation or government department, where legislative change – which is complex and prolonged – will be required, where reforms are expensive and unpopular with the work force, and where they conflict

with the policy direction that has been traditionally pursued. There are also factors that assist the process; primary amongst these is degree of political support that can be garnered, whether from the government or the opposition. If reforms can be framed to draw on common ground between the various stakeholders, i.e. the political system, the administrative system and the advocacy system, then the process is likely to be more effective.

Implementing quality into the reform process

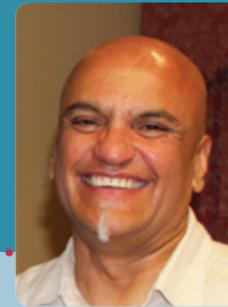
The establishment of quality assurance mechanisms, based on standards, should help obviate the need for further reform of the sector. This is a slightly contentious issue, and critics of regulatory processes in other jurisdictions have argued that some measures are overly superficial and reductionist. Nonetheless, the benefits of having a standards based system can outweigh the disadvantages in a number of respects.

It can help create a common view of a good quality service, and it can pre-empt the development of unhealthy organisational cultures that are unwittingly collusive and could ultimately become corrupt. The usefulness of standards depends on how they are judged, and it can be unhelpful to import them directly from sectors such as health where cause and effect, for a number of reasons, are more predictable.

Standards in social care should have certain amount of flexibility, acknowledging the variability in children and family needs, the different developmental stages in young people's lives, the importance of prioritising a child or young person's wellbeing and based on common sense. If standards are established, they should be allowed a period of time to 'bed down' in order to create an atmosphere where staff view them as positive objectives rather than draconian measures.

Finally, the child protection and welfare sectors in the English speaking world have been subject to so much structural change over the past two decades that they could justifiably claim 'reform fatigue'. It is important to remember that the basis for most reforms is a worthy aspiration to address adversity in children's lives as effectively as possible and where feasible, to prevent it from developing at an early stage.

If past results have not lived up to expectations, it may be because of the way the reforms were shaped, the manner of implementation or the presence of aggravating variables, and not because the basic ideology was flawed. Rather than repeating the same mistakes and hoping for a different result, the most promising solution is to develop a better understanding of the challenging and perverse aspects of reform and use the resulting intelligence to progress it positively.



The child protection system for Aboriginal and Islander children

Frank Hytten

Outgoing CEO, Secretariat of National Aboriginal & Islander Child Care (SNAICC)

My nearly seven years at SNAICC have been an incredible journey - confronting, frustrating, disappointing, exhausting, satisfying and exhilarating - and a few other emotions besides.

Trying to reflect on the child protection system in Australia, in particular its impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, is quite a challenge, because it is not just this system that requires comment, but the political and social context in which the system exists and operates.

It is of course self-evident that there are many instances in which removal of a child is necessary, but there must be better ways to do it. More can also be done to prevent removal, provide more culturally appropriate placements, better plan for cultural care and work faster towards reunification and appropriate long-term care.

You may consider this article rather emotional, and indeed quite damning of a many of our sector heads. But I think we have every right to get upset. We're talking about children. Real children. Not statistics in a report.

We've been working at this for a long time. We have everything we need to create a fair and efficient process, to adequately support these children and families instead of punishing them for the terrible situations they find themselves in. We have the research. We have the knowledge. Now we just need the courage to act.

When considering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system specifically, the 'system' is too chaotic, destructive and incomprehensible. For their families and communities, it is creating a grave crisis of dysfunction, grief and disillusion.

The numbers

The numbers speak for themselves - an increase of 65% in removals since the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 'apology' to the members of the Stolen Generations. But

this is just the tip of the iceberg. For many children and parents the emotional abuse involved in the removal is considerable and generally lasts for life. It is compounded with each additional experience of the 'system', including vicariously with the removal of the children of friends, family and others. The negative impacts of removal are further compounded by distance from home, placements outside community, culture, language and the separation of siblings from each other.

The inquiries

There have been 39 inquiries into Child Protection in Australia in the last 10 years. In addition are the 339 recommendations of the Deaths in Custody (1987) report, 54 in the Bringing them Home (1997) report and the 97 offered by the Little Children are Sacred (2007) report - most of which have been ignored. Each time these issues come to a head, another expensive and utterly wasteful inquiry is implemented to diffuse the demand for action and avoid actually doing anything to change the situation - and so it gets worse. Governments remain largely unaccountable, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities continue to be abused and destroyed - and blamed for causing a situation they have absolutely no control over.

Why?

Why is this the case, and why has it been the case for so long? I think the process of colonisation, which commenced 230 years ago, continues to this day. All around the world where colonisation has occurred and continues to occur, family destruction is a primary aim and children are often targeted for removal - for 'care' (read civilising) and adults to prison (for re-educating into the 'white' way).

This is occurring in increasing numbers in Australia. As families breakup, so too do communities. As communities are destroyed (from past methods of herding people into missions, to current policies of eviction from homelands, child removal and adult incarceration), colonisation continues, snowballing into ever increasingly harmful and tragic (and self-fulfilling) entrapments for Aboriginal and





65%
increase in removals since the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 'apology' to the members of the Stolen Generations

Torres Strait Islander peoples – again, for which they are mostly blamed.

These cycles of exclusion, houselessness, deficits in education, higher unemployment, ridiculousness of the rates of incarceration, the destruction of health, discrimination, result in intergenerational homelessness in the broadest sense of culture and narrowest sense of security, shelter and emotional comfort. This is further exacerbated by the lack of services provided in regional and remote areas.

Service providers

Governments are ill equipped to deal with this situation. Governments are best dealing with the 'big picture'. The political process makes them fearful, risk-adverse and thus very policy conservative, especially of things they do not and cannot understand. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are therefore greatly scrutinised and over governed.

Governments are centralised, and by their nature develop one-size-fits-all policies that generate from the centre – which makes them generally unable to hear advice even of the operatives closer to the communities in which policies are enforced.

NGOs have similar issues. The larger the bureaucracy, the less responsive the services offered are, and one-size-fits-all services generally do not fit anyone very well. Furthermore, service providers while being accountable to the top, are often unaccountable to the bottom - their clients, the people they are set up to serve and do want to care most about.

Of course there are numerous exclusions to this rule, within both government and the NGO sector, but it is irresponsible to ignore. I would like to challenge the way in which these very large organisations engage with the lives of real people, usually through resolving problems through fiscal and political measurements instead of through a social justice, humanitarian lens.

This is a part of a longer discussion, one I would like to have when time and space allows.

The future

The time for excuses is done. If we are serious, given the above, this does not require much explaining - read any policy document from any inquiry or any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation, including SNAICC. There are also many excellent books written on the subject.

The challenge is to have the courage to act - to move our work practice and our organisations in the direction that makes sense to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

If we are to make any progress we need to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in decision making processes. This must be adequately resourced and supported – we can't afford to repeat mistakes of the past by misinterpreting good intentions or tokenism as inclusion.

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is pleased to announce the appointment of new Chief Executive Officer Gerry Moore, a Yuin man from the south coast of NSW.

It Takes a Village to Raise a Child



Albert Barelds
Executive Director, Child & Family Welfare Association of South Australia (CAFWA-SA)

Seriously, is there anything more important than the future of our children?

It still amazes me that it is not a foregone conclusion for individuals, agencies and governments that, in order to get the best outcomes for children, everyone needs to put up their hand and play a part. It is not something what we can pass on to someone else and have trust that it will be taken care of.

For children to grow up safely and be able to manifest their full potential in a healthy environment we all need to step up - it is an individual and collective responsibility that must be taken seriously. The old African proverb states this in a very powerful way: "It takes a whole village to raise a child".

CAFWA-SA has continuously advocated for a collaborative approach to resolve the problems and challenges we face in the child protection sector. We are not alone in this - many other agencies and individuals have argued for a different approach and have recognised that we can't just leave it to governments to solve child protection issues.

Similarly, as individuals, it is not enough to make a child protection notification when we see that a child is abused or at serious risk of abuse or neglect. Each one of us needs to recognise that we have a responsibility to be part of the solution. It starts with the recognition that the protection of children is everyone's business. We need to respond to this challenge if we want the future to be bright for our children.

Looking back on the recent child protection symposium 'Keeping Children Safe Together', it's important to appreciate the distance we have travelled in 2015. This event brought together over 300 people, with many representing non-government organisations or government agencies as well as committed individuals wanting to discuss ways to improve children's safety in our families and communities.

Symposium organisers SACOSS, CAFWA-SA, SNAICC, the Australian Centre for Child Protection and DECD – Families SA, together with the many symposium



presenters reflected the very broad commitment to find new answers and to seek ways how we may change a child protection system that has been developed over several generations, which is now broken and in need of serious repair.

The development of new approaches will take time as there are no quick or easy solutions to the complexities of child protection. Change will require a strong commitment from all key players - government, non-government, university institutes and others.

In 2016 we expect to see the outcomes of the SA Child Protection Systems Royal Commission. CAFWA-SA wants to work with colleagues in the sector to get the best possible evaluation of the report's recommendations and work together on an early action agenda and implementation plan.

We also want to further develop the collaborative work undertaken in 2015. I look forward to working with our colleagues in 2016 to improve the outcomes for children at risk.

How would you spend extra money in child protection?

Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People

2016 priorities for child protection

- Continued and strengthened partnership and co-design with the Families SA Executive to improve policies and practices;
- A joint approach with SA Government to consider the SA Royal Commission recommendations and develop a sector-wide action plan;
- **Progress new initiatives in relation to:**
 - young people leaving care;
 - siblings in care;
 - the voices of children to be heard and considered;
 - reduction of the number of Aboriginal children in care;
 - delegation of case management decisions to NGOs;
 - review of foster carer assessments and carer payments.
- **Regular best practice training for practitioners across the sector;**
- **Increased emphasis on prevention and early intervention;**
- **Strengthen the collaboration with the Australian Centre for Child Protection;**
- **Continued and active participation in the SNAICC Family Matters initiative to make quantifiable progress in improving safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;**
- **Influencing the out-of-home care (OOHC) contract reform project agenda in Families SA to ensure that the review meets its broad objectives and addresses specific issues for CAFWA members such as:**
 - improved outcomes for children and families;
 - avoidance of unnecessary competition within the sector;
 - strengthening collaboration between NGO providers;
 - recognition for the need to have small and country specific providers; and,
 - agreed services costing and increased focus on better outcomes.

In December 2015 we farewellled Pam Simmons from her position as Guardian for Children and Young People.

Pam was appointed to the newly created position of Guardian for Children and Young People in South Australia in August 2004.

The Guardian is a statutory position to advocate for and promote the best interests of children and young people under the guardianship, or in the custody of the Minister. The Guardian provides advice to the Minister, monitors the quality of care provided to children, investigates serious matters and advocates for required change.

Immediately prior to this position, Pam was Executive Director of the South Australian Council of Social Service, a position that she held for more than five years.

In her role as Guardian, Pam has:

- acted at the direction of children and young people who have expressed their views, concerns, opinions and wishes to her;
- listened to and amplified the voices of children and young people in South Australian state care - voices that may have been historically overlooked;
- promoted the rights of children that fed the development of the Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care; and,
- work to establish the Office as a place that provided independent assessment and representation of children's perspectives.

SACOSS has been privileged to work closely with Pam as Guardian for Children and Young people - we thank her for her tireless work and wish her all the very best for her new ventures.

In 2016 we welcome Amanda Shaw as the new Guardian in South Australia.

We asked ...

The survey

944 subscribers to the Guardian's Information Service were invited to respond to an electronic survey between 1 and 4 December 2015. Respondents were asked to nominate which of 13 given options they would choose to improve South Australia's child protection system. They were asked, if given \$100, how they would proportion it among their selections.

358 responses were received.

90% chose 'More early intervention and family support' as one of their options and collectively allocated **\$33 of the available funds to it.**

The survey also included a free-text option which asked 'What else would you do to improve child protection in South Australia that is not covered in the previous options?' 263 of the 358 respondents provided responses to that question. We will update this report when we have analysed the text responses.

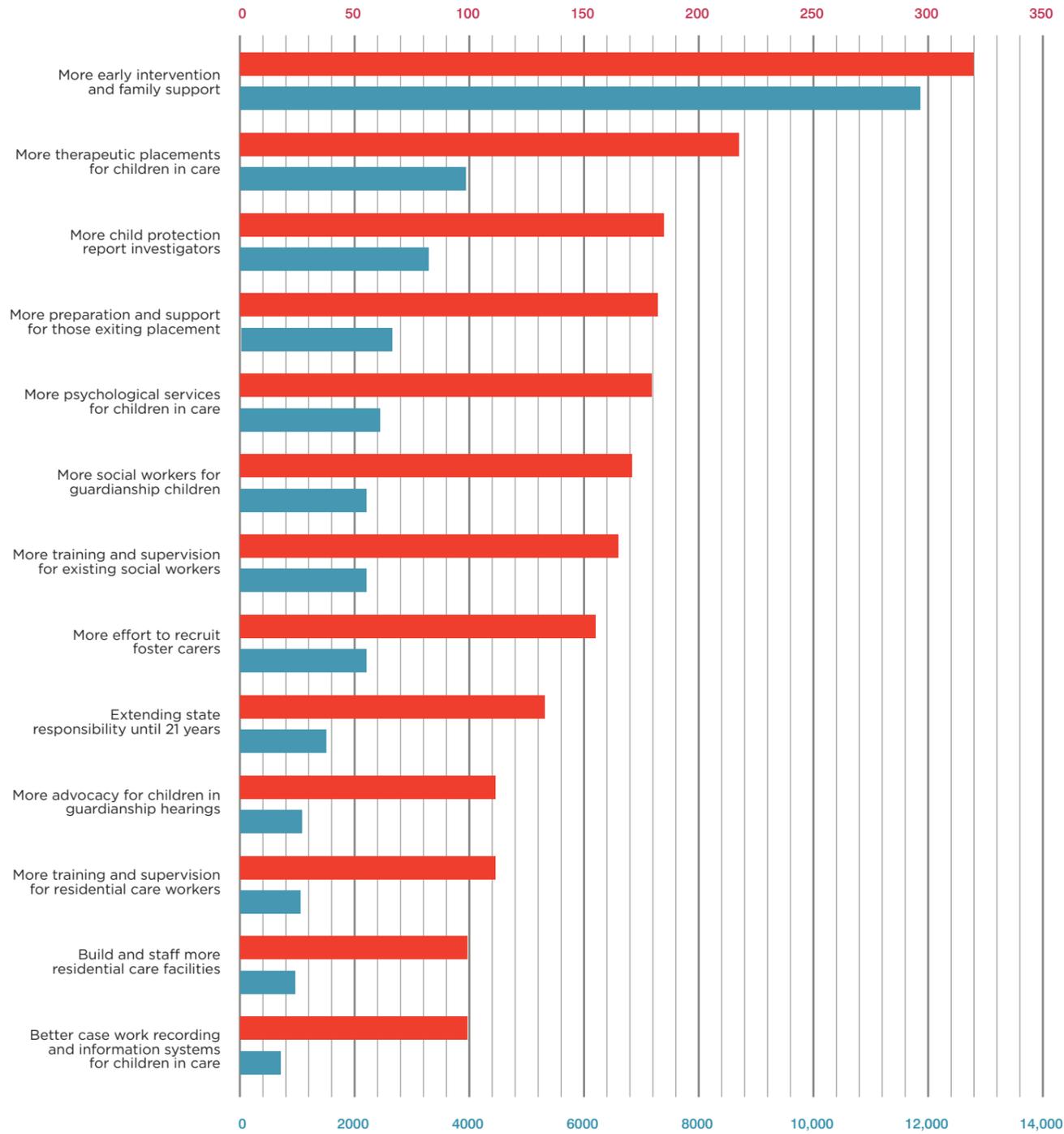
For further information contact:

malcolm.downes@gcyp.sa.gov.au
08 8226 8564

We asked....

How would you like your money spent in child protection?

Number of times option was chosen



Total \$ allocated

How would you spend extra dollars for child protection?

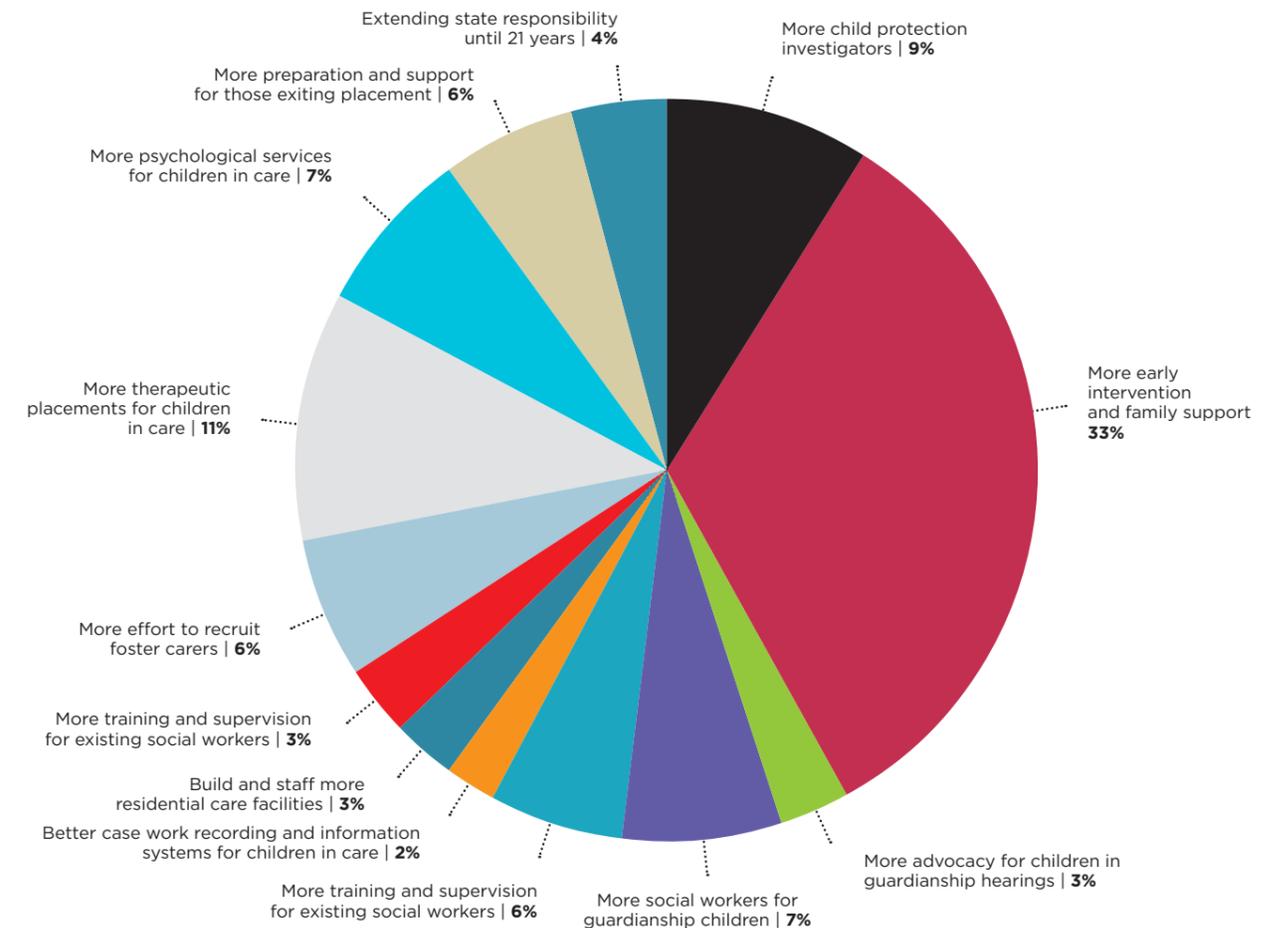
Imagine that you, as a taxpayer and concerned citizen, have an extra \$100 to spend to improve child protection. How would you distribute it to do the most good?

How would you distribute your \$100 to do the most good?

(whole dollars only, no \$ sign and it must add up to 100)

	total \$ allocated	times option chosen
More child protection report investigators	3,140	185
More early intervention and family support	11,892	320
More advocacy for children in guardianship hearings	1,035	111
More social workers for guardianship children	2,577	171
More training and supervision for existing social workers	2,124	165
Better case work recording and information systems for children in care	752	99
Build and staff more residential care facilities	1,116	101
More training and supervision for residential care workers	1,084	111
More effort to recruit foster carers	2,133	155
More therapeutic placements for children in care	3,938	218
More psychological services for children in care	2,404	180
More preparation and support for those exiting placement	2,105	182
Extending state responsibility until 21 years	1,490	133

Options as a percentage of total \$



SACOSS – Budget Submission Launch

SACOSS recently held an event to launch our State Budget Submission 2016-17 with a focus on unemployment in SA.

There were four speakers who shared with the audience their experiences of unemployment and the barriers to employment. Two speakers talked about training programs that led to successful career placement.

Media were invited to the launch and this resulted in stories on the SACOSS budget submission appearing in the Advertiser, as well as on television, radio and online.

South Australia currently has the highest unemployment rate of all states and territories. When combined with an underemployment rate of 10.5%, almost 18% of the labour force is underutilised. This means that more than 150,000 South Australians are unemployed or looking for extra hours.

The SACOSS submission contains 23 recommendations to grow employment opportunities, provide skills, and better address the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged job seekers.

Among the recommendations, SACOSS is urging the state government to address the scarcity of entry-level jobs for young people through measures including the re-introduction of the payroll tax exemption for apprentices and trainees, and by doubling of the number of graduate positions under the Jobs4Youth program.

The budget submission contains specific recommendations on training and skills including:

- increased funding to ACE providers through the Foundation Skills Grants;
- a new ACE engagement program;
- reinstatement of subsidised training places for community sector RTOs with a good track record;
- time-limited wage subsidies for people who have participated in Work Ready's Jobs First Employment Projects;
- Exemption of student course fees for people on Centrelink benefits; and
- Ongoing funding of the Building Family Opportunities program.

The submission also reiterates SACOSS' long standing call that a fair and sustainable revenue base should be maintained for the benefit of all South Australians.

You can access a copy of the SACOSS State Budget Submission 2016-17 on the SACOSS website www.sacoss.org.au

Thanks to speakers Sarah Pinkie, Carrie Lieneman, Brett Freeman and Ann Lawrence, and also a special mention to Kat Lee and Heather Nowak for volunteering as media interview subjects.



One of the speakers at the launch was Sarah Pinkie, a woman who has been unemployed for three years and is the sole parent of her 17-year-old son.



Keeping Children Safe, Together: A Child Protection Symposium

8 DECEMBER 2015 | ADELAIDE

Vivian Clark SACOSS Events Coordinator
Dr Catherine Earl SACOSS Senior Policy Officer

On 8 December 2015 the South Australian Council of Social Service, Child and Family Welfare Association (CAFWA-SA), Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), and the Department for Education and Child Development, in conjunction with the Australian Centre for Child Protection presented 'Keeping Children Safe, Together', a Symposium on the state of the Child Protection System in South Australia.

With a recent string of high profile cases highlighting failings in our child protection systems, the groundbreaking event brought together stakeholders during a time of fading confidence in the ability of our social services systems to keep South Australian children safe and healthy.

The event attracted stakeholders from the broader social services sector including those working in mental health, homelessness, youth services, drug and alcohol services, as well as academics, and staff from government departments for whom child protection is their primary focus. The collaborating organisations were overwhelmed by the demand for registrations, showing a significant appetite for an event of this nature.

The attendance of a diverse cross section of the community services sector indicates an awareness of the important role of these services in actioning the idea that child protection is everyone's business.

In the context of an overburdened child protection system and because of the contributing social issues associated with child harm, for example poverty, mental health and substance abuse, it is vital that professionals who engage with families and adults in other service contexts, as well as those who already work in child protection, work creatively and collaboratively to address the complex needs of vulnerable children.

The Keeping Children Safe, Together: A Child Protection Symposium program offered delegates the opportunity to gain insights and learnings from keynote speakers Professor Fiona Arney, Chair and Director of the Australian Centre for



Child Protection, and international expert Dr Helen Buckley, Associate Professor, School of Social Work and Social Policy at Trinity College Dublin. The day's speakers also included a raft of local and national experts presenting on a range of topics, as well as a deeply insightful presentation highlighting the lived experience of Tamara Barrow, a Young Consultant now working with CREATE Foundation, on her interaction with the SA system.

The Symposium also hosted the final public appearances of both outgoing Guardian for Children and Young People in SA, Pam Simmons, and former CEO of SNAICC, Frank Hytten.

Feedback from the day showed that symposium attendees are acutely aware that the SA system is in crisis. Attendees reported that they appreciated the opportunity to come together and to include broader stakeholders in the conversations on the day. It is clear that the audience is keen to hear more on practical solutions and that they hope to contribute their own expertise to the future directions of the child protection system.

After being reminded of the long string of commissions and inquiries relating to child protection, Dr Helen Buckley's presentation strongly resonated with the audience when she stated that while there is a strong desire for intelligent reform, commissions and inquiry findings can have unintended consequences, and that as a sector we should be careful what we wish for. An underpinning message from speakers on the day was that child abuse and neglect need to be treated as a public health problem with greater investment in prevention and early intervention.

SACOSS will continue to work alongside stakeholders in the lead up to, and after the Royal Commission findings being handed down, which has been extended again, and is now expected to be presented to the Governor on 5 August 2016.

The organisations that collaborated to present the symposium are grateful for the financial contribution from the Department for Education and Child Development, which allowed this important professional development event to be held at no cost to attendees.

Quick Facts

- There have been 39 enquiries in 10 years into child protection
- In 2013-14, the number of children who received child protection services was 143,023, with 73% being repeat clients. This is 1 in 37 children in Australia
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented: 1 in 17 Aboriginal children are in State care across Australia
- Our child protection systems are based on 1960s knowledge and 1950s family structures



2016 – The Year of the Great Tax Debate

Dr Greg Ogle
SACOSS Senior Policy Officer

This year is shaping up as the year of the great tax debate.

It began last year with both the South Australian government and federal government putting out discussion papers on tax reform. The state government introduced some tax cuts in the last state budget, but more needs to be done for state tax reform and it remains part of the national reform discussion. The federal reform process faltered in the middle of last year, but was re-started with a new Treasurer and Prime Minister.

The last time we had a major structural change to taxes and federal financial arrangements of the magnitude currently being talked about was at the turn of the century when the GST was introduced. The GST was on the table again this year and then it wasn't – but tax reform more generally is still likely to be central in the federal election this year.

Tax debates are not that exciting, but they are important. The tax system is crucial both to the ability of any government to provide vital services to the community, and to the capacity for governments to (re)distribute income through the tax-and-transfer system to ensure a fairer and more equal society. Government spending, funded through taxation, also provides employment to thousands of people – both directly and by boosting overall demand in the state economy.

Given this, the key questions SACOSS asks in any tax debate are:

- Will there be enough revenue to pay for public infrastructure and vital services into the future, and
- Will that revenue be collected fairly so that those who have the capacity to contribute more pay more and those who are struggling pay less?

Find out more about SACOSS' advocacy around a fair and adequate tax system at www.sacoss.org.au/fair-and-adequate-tax-system

In relation to the first question, there is plenty of analysis (from the Grattan Institute, the SA and NSW state governments and the federal government's Intergenerational Report) that shows more revenue will be needed to meet projected demands for services, particularly health services, if current service expenditure patterns continue. This is not about mismanagement or inefficiency, but a result of structural social and economic changes in Australia, including an ageing population and increases in the services demanded and possible.

In contrast to this increased demand, in December SACOSS published a Cost of Living Update which found that over the last decade taxes have not increased substantially in real terms per person or as a proportion of the economy. The report highlighted the basic issue: if we want to freeze our tax at "revenue neutral", or do the politically popular thing and cut taxes, then we will need to lower our expectations of what public goods and services will be provided. But if we want to maintain or increase services, we need to raise more revenue.

We all get benefits from public services, but the public goods and services purchased by taxation are particularly important for vulnerable and disadvantaged people. They are likely to rely more on the income supports and services that taxes pay for, and they have less means of obtaining those services in the more expensive private system.

But the question of who pays for those services is also crucial. As a general principle, personal income tax is a progressive tax (high income earners pay more, in proportion to their income), while flat rate taxes like the GST are regressive (low income earners pay more in proportion to their incomes).

SACOSS has supported our national body ACOSS in successfully challenging the economic assumptions about why we "need" a GST. A better starting point for tax reform is to fix the holes in the income tax system – things like overly generous and poorly targeted superannuation and capital gains concessions, as well as negative gearing provisions.



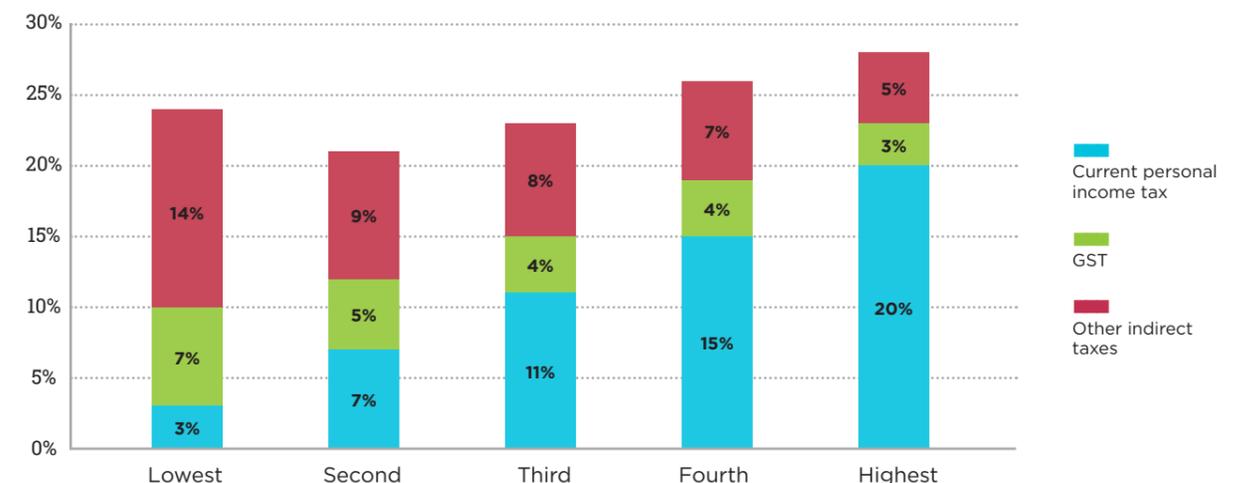
Who is paying what tax?

The final piece of this reform puzzle is ensuring that the services that are delivered are adequate and accessible to all Australians – regardless of their income or where they live. Such a universal service guarantee must be part of the outcome of any reform of tax and federal relations.

These principles provide important starting points that will underpin our advocacy in the great tax debates of 2016. The joint COSS network statement is available at: www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/COSS-federation-framework_FINAL.pdf

Late last year the Council of Social Services in each state and territory, along with ACOSS at the national level, came together to agree a set of principles for tax and federation reform.

ACOSS report: Tax Talk No. 1: Tax - Are We Paying Our Fair Share?





SACOSS Energy and Water Program Update

Jo De Silva
SACOSS Senior Policy Officer
- Energy, Water, Climate Change

South Australian consumers launch legal challenge to reduce electricity bills

The South Australian Council of Social Service has launched a landmark legal challenge that has the potential to significantly reduce household electricity bills in South Australia over the next five years.

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) is acting for SACOSS in a legal challenge to the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) recent electricity network revenue decision for SA Power Networks, which operates the electricity distribution network in South Australia.

This is an unprecedented step for SACOSS, but we are concerned about the impact of massive electricity bills on vulnerable and disadvantaged households, and as our application suggests, we believe there are significant problems in the AER's decision.

SACOSS is appealing the decision that determines how much SA Power Networks can spend on infrastructure - the so-called 'poles and wires'.

SACOSS is disputing the corporate operating costs allowed, as well as the rate for providing a return to investors in SA Power Networks' business. These costs are important because they are passed through to South Australian consumers.

If our appeal is successful, we estimate it would lead to savings of about \$10 over five years for average residential consumers.

The South Australian appeal follows a similar appeal in NSW, for which the decision is expected in early 2016.

PIAC CEO Edward Santow has said that the revenue granted by the AER to SA Power Networks is excessive, forcing consumers to pay more than is efficient for network services. Given the exponential rise in electricity prices in recent years, consumers, especially those on low and fixed incomes, are suffering.

The law requires expenditure to be efficient and PIAC has stated that it doesn't believe the final determination reflects efficient costs for consumers.

The SACOSS appeal was launched on 19 November 2015 in the Australian Competition Tribunal, on the same day that SA Power Networks lodged its own appeal. The SA Power Networks appeal has a few aspects, including rate of return, inflation, bushfire expenditure, access poles inspections and forecast labour cost escalation.

If the SA Power Networks appeal is successful, households would be expected to save around \$40 a year instead of \$140 a year that would have been allowed by the final AER decision. The SACOSS appeal would boost the \$140 a year average saving for residential consumers by about \$30 a year more than the regulator's decision allowed for.

The Australian Competition Tribunal held its first hearing on this matter in January 2016.

SA Power Networks Proposing New Tariffs

In a major win for South Australian consumers, SA Power Networks has proposed a more gradual approach to the introduction of demand tariffs than what was previously being considered.

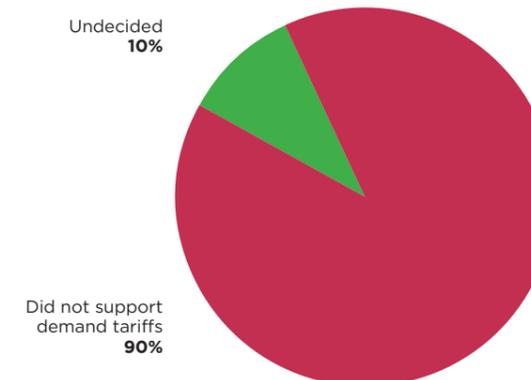
Consumer consultations undertaken by SACOSS revealed almost blanket opposition to the introduction of new tariffs being proposed by SA Power Networks.

These tariffs aim to introduce widespread cost reflective pricing as required by rules set by the Australian Energy Market Commission, but could see some household bills rise by \$150 per annum as well as big price jumps for small businesses.

In early October 2015, SACOSS held independent consultations with consumers, SACOSS member organisations and business representatives, to consider SAPN's proposals on tariffs.



Support for SAPN demand tariffs



From these discussions it was clear that community members are alarmed about the impacts of proposed new SA Power Networks demand tariffs that will see around 50% of households and businesses worse off.

The SACOSS consultations found that most consumers understood the rationale behind demand tariffs, but the majority did not want to be forced to change to a new tariff arrangement (particularly when SAPN's own data confirms that a large number of consumers would end up worse off).

90% of the participants SACOSS consulted did not support SAPN's proposed demand tariffs, while 10% were undecided.

SACOSS found that consumers were concerned about resulting greater bill variability, making it more difficult to budget for bills. Consumer advocates were concerned that this variability would undermine years of their work with retailers to put in place bill smoothing arrangements.

As businesses face major price increases they may be likely to increase their own prices. Consumers consulted by SACOSS indicated that the cost to businesses was seen as far outweighing the gain that might be generated for some.

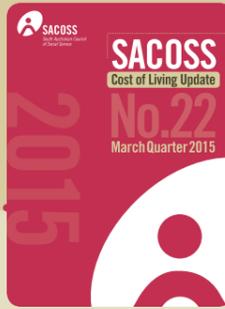
Given the serious economic situation South Australia is in, as well as the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment, those consulted were unconvinced that this was the right time to impose massive changes, especially at the risk of increasing the cost of doing businesses and putting more pressure on the South Australian community.

SA Power Networks adopted its revised approach late in 2015 and has stated:

"From July 2018, business customers above 40MWh annual consumption and residential customers above 20MWh annual consumption will be assigned to the transition demand tariff, if they have the required advanced interval meter. Customers above these thresholds but with an existing accumulation style meter will be assigned to a transition usage based tariff. This will impact around 9700 businesses (with electricity bills around \$10,000 - \$12,000 or more pa) and 4000 residential customers (with electricity bills around \$6000 or more pa)."

SACOSS cautiously welcomes this move as a much less significant negative impact on consumers than what had previously been on the table. However, we intend to fully engage with the upcoming Australian Energy Regulator process to assess the fine detail of the proposal.

To find out more about our Energy & Water program work head to www.sacoss.org.au/energy-water



Some Welcome Red Tape Reduction

SACOSS

On 3 December 2015 the South Australian government introduced the Statutes Amendment (Commonwealth Registered Entities) Bill 2015 into parliament.

It aims to remove duplication of reporting and licence requirements for charities registered with the national charity regulator, the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC).

The bill was first mooted in 2013 when South Australia was seen to be the first jurisdiction to align its requirements with the ACNC. But the bill was put on hold when the new federal government announced it would abolish the ACNC.

The government didn't, however, get the legislation to abolish the ACNC through the Senate, and it now looks like the ACNC will continue into the future. Accordingly, SACOSS wrote to the state government some months ago to ask for this bill to be brought back.

The bill is fairly simple. It inserts a few clauses into the state Associations Incorporation Act to exempt entities registered with the ACNC from the reporting requirements under the Act. The bill also inserts similar clauses into the Collections for Charitable Purposes Act to exempt ACNC-registered organisations from fundraising licencing and reporting requirements.

Both the Associations Incorporation Act and the Collections for Charitable Purposes Act remain in place and their full provisions apply to those organisations not registered with the ACNC. However, where charities are registered with the ACNC, the state government largely cedes regulation to the Commonwealth (reducing costs for the state government and red tape for our sector).

In essence, SA charities can still be incorporated under the state Associations Act, but once registered with the ACNC the charities simply report to the Commonwealth. They will be required to notify the SA Minister if they intend to fundraise in South Australia, but will not require a fundraising licence.

The bill also provides for information sharing between state and federal governments, and has a few other minor tweaks to legislation. Usefully, it also abolishes the need for different fundraising licences for events and for general fundraising, combining them into one licence category for non-ACNC registered charities.

SACOSS is calling on all MPs to support and pass the legislation as soon as possible.

Fundraising Licences

In September 2014 there was a fair bit of confusion and alarm when Consumer and Business Services (CBS) sent out new Application Forms for charities with fundraising licences. The forms appeared to have onerous new requirements.

We queried the forms, and raised our concerns with Minister Gago. After some good collaboration where we worked with the Minister's office and the staff at CBS, the Application Forms were revised and re-launched. The new forms make much clearer distinctions between the requirements for those renewing licences and those applying for new licences, and the result should be a fairly simple process for established charities renewing their licences.

The application and reporting will be even simpler for charities registered with the ACNC if the legislation to align reporting requirements is passed by the SA parliament, but in the meantime, it is nice when advocacy and consultation work!

SACOSS thanks its members who raised their concerns, and the Minister and CBS staff who responded to those concerns.

SMALL

CHANGE



23

Tuesdays 6pm on

Small Change is SACOSS' weekly radio program that shares stories of achievement, innovation and social justice. Broadcast Tuesdays at 6pm on Radio Adelaide, you can also listen to and download the podcasts at radio.adelaide.edu.au/program/small-change/

Here are some podcast highlights from the past few months:

Upgrading the Adelaide Women's Prison

A new project at the Adelaide Women's Prison will soon be underway - upgrades to the old accommodation facilities will be made and women prisoners will have the chance to become members of the construction team and learn valuable skills for possible career pathways on their release.

The project is a component of the Strong Foundations and Clear Pathways: Women Offender Framework and Action Plan, which was launched at the end of last year and aims to reduce recidivism and successfully introduce women prisoners back into society. Sarah Paddick is Director at Totalspace Design and the architect behind the accommodation upgrade.

radio.adelaide.edu.au/sarah-paddick-adelaide-womens-prison-upgrade/

Micro Enterprise for people with disability (part of our series on social enterprises)

Starting one's own micro enterprise is a daunting and challenging task - and it can be particularly challenging for those of us who may need the extra help and support to get it off the ground, especially if there are limited services designed to cater for diverse needs.

The Micro Enterprise Project is one such service - it supports people with significant disabilities to pursue a career and start their own enterprise.

Jayne Barrett is from the Community Living Project Inc. and she joined Small Change's Lisa Burns for a chat about the work and services of CLP, the positive impact the Micro Enterprise Project is having in the lives of its participants and what being involved in such projects, means to her.

radio.adelaide.edu.au/micro-enterprise-project-small-business-for-people-with-disability/

Victorian Connecting Home Service

When we seek the support of service providers, it is hoped the support we'll receive will be tailored to meet our individual needs. Often this isn't the case - and as clients we can feel like we're accessing a one-size-fits-all service that doesn't actually suit everyone.

Connecting Home is an independent agency which works collaboratively across the Aboriginal and the broader mainstream service sectors, to respond to the varied needs of Stolen Generations survivors, as identified by them.

John Dommert is the CEO of Connecting Home and he started off by explaining how the organisation first came about.

radio.adelaide.edu.au/connecting-home-a-service-for-the-stolen-generations/

The Minimbah Project

It's generally assumed that once a person is born, they will have access to a range of basic rights and services, such as an education, a tax file number, a driver's licence and even joining sporting clubs. But if in the very earliest stages of life, the birth of that person isn't registered and a birth certificate isn't obtained, these basic human rights can become out of reach.

Will Winter is the National Coordinator of the Minimbah Project- a not-for-profit organisation which helps people to register and gain a birth certificate. He joined Small Change's Lisa Burns for a chat and he started off by describing the statistics for lack of birth registration and certification in Australia.

radio.adelaide.edu.au/the-minimbah-project/



Daphne Gum (MBE, OAM) — South Australian disability pioneer turns 100 years old

Vicki Renner

Daphne Lorraine Gum cites a moment when she was four years old as the catalyst for her desire to work with people with disability. It was 1920 and she and her sister were running to catch a train that was pulling out of the station. Behind them, their father called out, "Walk a little slower girls. Mother can't run."

For the first time, Daphne realised her mother, who had suffered from polio as a girl, was not able to do what she could. It changed her life and drove her to work in teaching children with cerebral palsy. Daphne was a teacher, a leader, a volunteer and a fierce defender of the right to education. There are people all over the country who can point to Daphne Gum as the reason they were able to achieve their dreams.

In 1945, after nine years of teaching roles in South Australia, Daphne was selected from applicants across Australia to work and learn at the Spastic Centre in the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. Daphne returned to Adelaide in 1946 to pioneer the work of teaching children with cerebral palsy in South Australia. She was employed by the Crippled Children's Association of South Australia to set up and direct the education facilities for children with cerebral palsy. She was one person, operating out of one room, in the Outpatients Department in the hospital.

From three students on the first day, the need grew and grew as children continued to come to the hospital, eager to learn. For the children and their families, this was the first time the students had been spoken to as people with potential, as 'real' people.

Some of those early students stayed in touch with Daphne for the rest of their lives, including a young boy named Michael Woolley. As an adult, Michael served as a member of The Crippled Children's Association Board for 21 years and on the SACOSS Executive during the 1980s and 1990s. Michael, a lifetime member of SACOSS, passed away in 2013.

It wasn't long before one room was not large enough to accommodate the students in the hospital. In 1952, Ashford House was set up to provide education and opportunities specific to the needs of children with cerebral palsy and Daphne was appointed as the Director of Education. When in 1956 she traveled to Europe



for a world congress, Daphne visited a number of rehabilitation centres. In a tribute to Daphne, it is noted that she 'returned to Adelaide knowing the innovative practices under her guidance had ranked Ashford House with the best in the world'.¹ To this day, Ashford House is a place of education for children disability, forming part of the Errington Special Education Centre.

Despite officially retiring from teaching in her 60s, Daphne continued to work in social services. From 1982 to 2006 (at the ripe age of 90), she served as Chairman and Coordinator of the Marjorie Black Rehabilitation Centre (aka Marjorie Black House).

This beautiful old building in Unley is now home to SACOSS, thanks to the efforts Daphne took to ensure the building was handed over to an organisation that would prioritise the needs of all people in need. She was recently honoured when a small room was officially named the 'Daphne Gum Quiet Room'.

Marjorie Black was a pioneer in providing services to people with mental health issues. In the late 1950s, after psychiatric wards closed and people were released to the community, Marjorie developed friendship clubs and activities to provide social interaction for the ex-residents. Marjorie Black House was entirely staffed by volunteers, including Daphne, who ran the Tuesday Club, chaired the meetings, coordinated activities, managed the monthly markets, which were the primary source of income, and wrote hundreds of thank you letters to donors. Her Tuesday Club was the last to close, and held its final gathering on 16 August 2005.

Daphne Lorraine Gum turned 100 years old on 24 January, 2016 and over the course of a century she has seen immense change in disability work, starting with the recognition that children with cerebral palsy can indeed learn. From that day at the age of four, when she first realised her mother's life was impacted by disability, to the months of negotiation in 2006 when she organised for SACOSS to become the tenant of Marjorie Black House, Daphne has not wavered.

¹Helen Cornish, in A Rich Tapestry of Lives about old scholars of Annesley College (formerly MLC, where Daphne attended school).

Daphne Gum (MBE, OAM)

- Pioneered the work of teaching children with cerebral palsy in South Australia
- Awarded MBE in 1960
- Honoured with first Rotary Club of Adelaide Vocational Service Award
- Awarded Order of Australia Medal in 1996
- Served as Chairperson and Coordinator of the Marjorie Black Rehabilitation Centre from 1982-2006

She has remained committed to the role of education and friendship in changing lives. She is still an inspiration to many.



2016 activity:

- Launch of SACOSS State Government Budget Submission
- Mid Term Report Card: SACOSS rates the state government on performance so far
- SACOSS report on gambling taxes
- Cost of Living report
- Exclusive Member Only Event: the 6th Annual Post Budget Breakfast with the Treasurer
- Vulnerable Customers and Affordability Conference 2016: Energy, Water and Telecommunications
- Leadership 2016: SACOSS will connect with leaders of Australian NGOs, unions, social welfare organisations and services, charities, and advocacy groups, around the future we want to see
- Anti-Poverty Week
- A survey of SA political parties on taxation
- A campaign around state government grants and contracts

And a million things we haven't even thought of yet!

Get involved with SACOSS

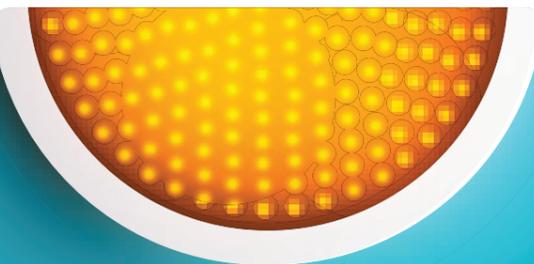
Help us enhance the voice of the community on behalf of vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians. If you aren't already, become a SACOSS member today sacoss.org.au/membership

SACOSS sends out a fortnightly eBulletin to our members listing brief descriptions of upcoming events, job vacancies, and other items relevant to the community services sector. You can now subscribe to the eBulletin and submit entries via our new website. Visit sacoss.org.au/ebulletin for all the details.

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POLICY CHALLENGES FOR THE ENERGY INDUSTRY: VIEWS FROM KEY STAKE-HOLDERS FORUM

16TH MARCH 2016

This forum, with a mixture of presentations and open conversation, explored the changing energy market and implications for consumer protections. Key themes for discussion included:

- Current and future challenges from an energy industry perspective
- Consumer experiences and emerging issues and concerns from 3 jurisdictions
- Views from various policy makers of current and future activity in this area

A diverse range of industry leaders presented:

- Dr Steven Kennedy, Department of Industry
- Janine Young, Energy and Water Ombudsman of NSW
- Ron Ben-David, Essential Services Commission of Victoria
- Tim Nelson, AGL Energy
- Tim O'Rourke, CitiPower PowerCor



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