

# SACOSS NEWS

Justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians

## State Election Edition

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For Civilisation

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# Summer 2014



**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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## Board 2013-2014

Name	Board position	Year term expires
Michael Dawson	Member	2015
Paul Scully	Member	2015
Monique Palmer	Member	2015
Leigh Garrett	Member	2014
Patsy Kellett	Member	2014
Nicole Chaplin	Member	2014
Peter Sandeman	Member	
Helen Connolly	Chairperson	2014
Ross Womersley	Executive Director	

## Policy Council 2013-2014

Category Description	Person Elected	Organisation	Term Expires
Chair	Helen Connolly		2014
Peak Org	Geoff Harris	MCSA	2014
Reps	Gill McFadyen	CCSA	2014
	Andris Banders	SANDAS	2015
	Anne Bainbridge	YACSA	2015
	Mark Waters	Reconciliation SA	2015
	Lee-Anne Gassner	Baptist Care	2015
	Alan Graham	A&CS	2014
Reps of NGOs	Jane Longbottom	LWB	2014
	Libby Craft	UCW Port Adelaide	2014
	Professor Ed Carson	SPRG UniSA	2014
	Helen Lockwood	LCC	2014
	Cate Keane	St Johns Youth Services	2014
	Kate Simpson	Uniting Communities	2014
	Susan Errington	Legal Services Comm.	2015
	Louise Kelly	OARS/Cty Transitions	2015
	Mariann McNamara	BINSA	2015
Reps of Aboriginal NGOs	Karen Glover	Pangula Mannamurna Inc	2014
Reps of non-metro NGOs	Anthea Pavy	UCW Country	2014
	Rob Foggo	AC Care	2015
Individual Members	Phillip Beddall		2014
	Angela de Conno		2014
	Paul Laris		2015
	Sageran Naidoo		2015
Board Member Reps	TBA		



## Editorial

**Ross Womersley**  
Executive Director, SACOSS

As we look ahead to what 2014 might bring, we already know that our community of South Australia faces some significant challenges.

Secure, long term, and well paid employment has always been one of the most important mechanisms to prevent poverty and issues of employment and unemployment were brought into sharp focus in late 2013 with Holden's decision to close its manufacturing plant in Playford.

This will place enormous pressure on communities in the north and also right across Adelaide wherever elements of the car industry component manufacturers are based. Despite the at best misleading, and at worst deceitful, advertising campaign that Holden put to air within days of their announcement promising they are actually here to stay, another 13,000 jobs are now at risk.

This arrives in a context where Adelaide's northern suburbs already struggle with relatively high levels of both unemployment and underemployment as well as alarmingly high levels of youth unemployment. Accompanying this of course is the extensive presence of poverty some of which has now unfortunately become deeply entrenched.

There are three great challenges.

One is to ensure support is available to Holden employees and workers in manufacturers down the supply chain to transition into new work roles. This is in large part a job for Holden but both the state and federal government will undoubtedly be challenged to assist.

A second is to ensure urgent support to those component manufacturers and other related industries to identify new markets and ways to reinvent their capacity so jobs aren't lost – ideally new job opportunities created. These businesses need assistance to transition to new activities that capitalise on their existing expertise, that help them sustain existing jobs, as well as create new employment opportunities within the community.

The third challenge remains new job creation. In the dark shadow of the announcement SACOSS called on the federal government to immediately set-aside the \$500 million it was no longer going to need to give to Holden both for support to businesses in the Holden supply chain, and for future job creation.

Which takes me to another of the challenges this year – where does the money come from?

Whenever governments promise companies hundreds of millions of dollars in corporate welfare these funds come from our taxes. Just as our taxes pay for things like our hospitals, schools and roads our taxes pay for all sorts of direct (drought relief packages) and indirect (e.g. first home owners grants) industry assistance.

We know most people hate the idea of paying taxes, yet at the very same time we always want the best possible services. We want roads that help us get easily from A to B, we want a health system that ensures we get to live the healthiest lives possible, we want schools that teach our children how to build contributing lives in our community, we want a vibrant economy stimulated to create jobs, and we want support for our more vulnerable citizens.

While we always need to hold governments to account for the way they spend the resources at their disposal, we also need to acknowledge that if the bucket is shrinking there are some big consequences including seeing a reduction in services and their quality.

Our sector sees this first hand. We are the first place people turn when they can't get the support they need from government. Nowhere is the pressure on low income families from cost of living increases clearer than in the lives of the vast majority of people our sector supports.

Our sector is also on the receiving end when governments are forced to cut costs because commonly, as government departments are challenged with cutting costs, those that seem easiest are the ones that don't directly impact on department's themselves.

As you'll see from reading on in this edition, this tax problem is central to our election asks. We want whoever assumes government to commit to restoring tax revenues to at least the level they were prior to the GFC. And we want to be at the table when the decisions about how to do this are being made. Let not any of us be fooled by cheap promises of tax cuts unless they are clearly accompanied by the means to replace the revenue that's being given away.

In the knowledge that together we will make some progress in challenging poverty and disadvantage across our community in 2014.

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# From the Chair

Helen Connolly  
Chairperson, SACOSS

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It's a strange feeling as I write this piece for SACOSS News. Strange because I am writing before Christmas 2013 for a January 2014 edition. Although it is only a matter of weeks, the fact that it is a period that spans the end of one year and the beginning of another makes it far more significant than the time period suggests.

The New Year is a time for setting new goals and plans. Looking forward it is also a time in recent years where we have experienced so many national disasters across the country, so it is increasingly becoming a time of apprehension. As we think about natural disasters, extreme weather events and emergencies my mind quickly turns to recovery. I have always been interested in identifying what it is that helps individuals and communities to recover. What makes up the personal and community resilience required to rebuild community infrastructure and what part do we as organisations play?

As community services we play an important role in relation to resilience both as part of the community fabric and as a community asset that brokers connections and relationships between people and provides opportunities for communities to participate and connect to something bigger than individual interests. At times we can lose sight of this and get caught up in organisational priorities, agendas and sustainability. It is unfortunately an emergency or disaster that makes us stop and think about the important things in life. Likewise for organisations, in these times we can see our value through our responses to need. However, it is the work we do year in and year out with individuals, families and communities that goes unnoticed.

Through developing individual capacity, creating and supporting wellbeing, and providing opportunities for volunteering, service design and evaluation and expert input, we are contributing to community building. The interactions, connections and relationships between people that we facilitate is a critical element of the community resilience work we do every day.

This year we need to celebrate the everyday - it's the everyday services that are there all year which are the reason why we exist, but they aren't acknowledged or noticed until the extraordinary happens.

Whether it is a community disaster or event, or a personal or family crisis, it's the community services which are there to provide support, resources, hope and opportunities to rebuild, recover and refocus lives.

It is the fact that we are there everyday, holding the safety net that should be celebrated and acknowledged. In 2014 we should take the time to really value what we do at our core and what we achieve.

We are often so focused on what's next and new, bright and shiny that we can forget that our strength is in our vision for communities and our performance in relation to our achievements against our mission and values, rather than the funkiness of our new services. We should not lose sight of the distinctive impact we make when we operationalise our values to achieve our vision and mission.

In 2014 as we anticipate significant changes in the way services are funded and in our relationships with government at a federal and state level, solidarity and collaborative and collective effort and the creation of new models of sector partnerships will be more important than ever.

As individual organisations and as a sector the onus even more than ever will be on us to stand our ground and ensure that:

- voices of those we are working with and for are amplified
- and the contribution that we make to civil society and community infrastructure is valued respected and defended.

It is also a time for us as a sector to develop some creative ways of working together and sharing and combining resources as well as new ways of working alongside communities.

Our involvement in the lives of South Australian communities is essential for Justice, Opportunity and Shared Wealth for all. We are a key contributor to the social good and our everyday work, whilst seemingly non spectacular, is vital.

This is also the key theme for our State Election 2014 campaign: **without taxes vital services disappear.**

Our campaign is about bringing the everyday work of community services into focus and asking the community to contemplate a place without vital services. Our goal is to make the case that these services must be paid for and whilst cheap tax cuts might be appealing at an individual level they are not from a community perspective. A community without the everyday work of community services would be a community without necessary supports and infrastructure.

So in 2014 we should take every opportunity to celebrate and affirm the everyday work we do and join together to collaborate and advocate for the role of the sector in community life, and for our right to be encouraged and nurtured and recognised for our role in community resilience - not only at times of emergency, crisis and disaster but everyday.



## Taxes – Our Payment For Civilisation

Ian McAuley

Capitalism as an economic system has succeeded because policymakers in the past have understood that economies need a mixture of private and public goods and that some activities are best left to private markets while others are provided, funded, or regulated by governments.

This understanding rests on the idea that government is the community's means to provide collective services. It entails a sense of 'common wealth', in the traditional sense of the term. Those who seek to profit from the withdrawal of government have worked effectively to undermine that public idea.

The case for restoring government to its rightful role in doing what we cannot do in our individual capacities, or cannot do so well, is strong, but it means that we need to see taxes not as an unfair burden, but as a way of funding what we want to share.

Australian taxes, by comparison with other countries, are not high. Public opinion surveys suggest that around 60% of Australians believe that Australia is a high-taxing country, but OECD figures on average tax to GDP ratios (that is, tax as a share of the overall economy), show that we are among the low-tax countries, and well below the OECD average. If our taxes were at the OECD average of 34.9% of GDP, we would have had another \$123b in public revenue in 2011-12.

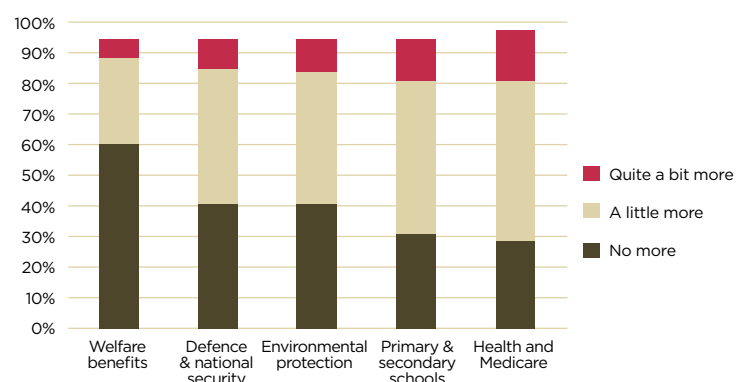
Australia does not have a "debt crisis", nor a budget crisis. But we do have a public revenue problem. To get an idea of the extent of the recent shortfall in public revenue, imagine that tax collections had stayed at their 2004-05 level, when total taxes were 30.3% of GDP. Applying that to GDP in 2011-12 we would have collected \$446 billion in taxes in 2011-12. As it was, we collected only \$391 billion - a shortfall of \$55 billion. That's ten years of the additional school funding recommended by Gonski, more than the capital cost of the much-maligned National Broadband Network, enough to fund over two years a high-speed rail connecting the capitals from Adelaide to Brisbane, with a \$50 weekly boost to the Newstart Allowance paid for from the small change.

State and local government have experienced similar falls in revenue.

But does this justify raising taxes? Advocates of lower taxes commonly argue that high taxes are bad for economic growth. But many OECD countries with high tax rates have enjoyed higher economic growth, and when judging by the World Economic Forum's competitiveness index, there may even be a slightly positive relationship between higher taxes and better competitiveness. Of course there are many factors contributing to competitiveness, but what the data shows is that *there is no evidence to support the idea that high taxes impede economic growth.*

What counts for economic competitiveness is the pattern of public spending and the quality of public services. If spending is wasteful then economic performance does suffer, but if there is inadequate spending on essential services which the market cannot supply or cannot supply efficiently, then the economy will under-perform. If a country has an inadequate tax base to support its public spending then there arise economic problems, as has been the case in Britain, the USA and the Mediterranean countries.

Willingness to pay increased tax for public services



The public attitude to taxes has been well-researched and it appears that if we can see that our taxes are spent accordance with our wishes, and that they are spent responsibly, we don't mind paying taxes. However, for many important government programs, we don't see those connections between what we spend and what we get in return (see insert "A Taxpayer in Distress"). There is a clear need to link taxes to benefits if we are to talk about building a sustainable tax base.

There are some other basic principles and steps for improving public revenue. The obvious quick fixes are to retain the mining and carbon taxes, and while these are good taxes by economic criteria, their revenue benefits are not necessarily ongoing. We need to look, once again, at the recommendations of the 2010 Henry Review, which had a strong emphasis on what are known as 'tax expenditures' – \$120 billion of tax revenue forgone every year as a result of tax deductions and rebates, such as those applying to superannuation. Unfortunately, the recommendations of the Henry Review about strengthening our long-term revenue base were largely put aside in the 'too hard' basket.

Perhaps, and it may be a sensitive issue, a higher GST may be a way of improving our public services – and it may be more equitable than it first looks if the revenue is put to the "social wage" which disproportionately benefits those on lower incomes. And finally, we should not forget about wealth. Most discussion about taxes and equity focuses on income, but wealth disparities have been widening significantly in recent years. Well-designed capital gains taxes, elimination of diversionary mechanisms such as family trusts, and gift and inheritance taxes could play a role in restoring fairness.

Ian McAuley is an adjunct lecturer in public sector finance at the University of Canberra and a fellow at the Centre for Policy Development. He is also a regular contributor for New Matilda [newmatilda.com](http://newmatilda.com)

This article is a heavily abridged version of a paper presented to the SACOSS AGM in November 2013. The paper can be read in full at: [sacoss.org.au/fair-and-sustainable-tax-base](http://sacoss.org.au/fair-and-sustainable-tax-base)

## A Taxpayer in Distress

In June 2012 the ABC Q & A program was devoted to then Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, answering questions from the studio audience.

The second questioner was upset about taxes. She said "We slide into the middle-class band whereby we don't get any subsidies whatsoever. We feel we're constantly paying out." She complained about the means testing of the private health insurance rebate – a means test applied to families with incomes above \$168 000 a year. That means her household was probably in the highest 6% of household incomes, but she was really just articulating a commonly-held view that she was "constantly paying out" – with the implication that her family is getting nothing in return.

Of course her household would be paying a reasonable amount of tax, but they would still be getting the benefit of heavily-subsidised education and health care, protective services such as defence, policing, search and rescue and firefighting, public assets such as roads and a range of other public assets and services.

With reflection she may have come to think about these benefits, but they don't immediately come to mind. If she and her family were in good health she may have little cause to think about the health care system, and even if she had been hospitalised she may not have realised that even with the top level private insurance, government would probably have paid most

of the bill. If her children were at private schools she may not have realised that the fees she pays are net of the government contribution, and that the teachers at that school got their degrees at a publicly-funded university, as her children would in time. When she paid her family's private health insurance she may not have realised that, even though the 30% rebate had been abolished, the premium was still subsidised because of her exemption from the Medicare Levy Surcharge.

Perhaps she did think about the roads, the ferries, the council libraries and parks, and the police forces, considering these all to be state and local government services, unaware of the way much public revenue, collected by the Commonwealth, flows to state and local governments.

And it would have been even harder for her to be conscious of the way in which governments in countries like Australia have made our lives so much better over the years. For example, during the last century, thanks largely to government investments in public health, life expectancy at birth rose by around 30 years, and annual death rates from infectious diseases fell from 300 to less than 10 per 100 000. Our cities have become much cleaner and safer and over the last 40 years road fatalities have been on a steady downward trend, falling from around 25 to 6 per 100 000 people, thanks to both private vehicle design and to public contributions through roads, research and regulation.

# State Election 2014

## SACOSS

Elections provide important opportunities to seek commitments and policy outcomes on a range of issues of concern to vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians and to our sector. The SA state election is in March 2014 and SACOSS has developed a platform of policies that we are seeking support for from all parties and candidates.

In particular, we believe it is essential we use the March election to highlight the problem of South Australia's declining tax base and falling revenues. The South Australian government collects less revenue per head of population than the national average of state taxes, and state taxes have declined markedly since the GFC leaving a \$1.1b hole in state revenues over the last five years.

This revenue decline is impacting on the ability of governments (of any persuasion) to fund the infrastructure, policies and programs which we need to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people. Unless we secure a fair and sustainable revenue base, we will continue to see cuts to services. However, in election periods most politicians are reluctant to talk about levying taxes. Instead, we often see promises of tax cuts which will only further impoverish government and the people who rely on government services.

We believe that there is a need to make clear the link between taxation and the services we all need, so SACOSS' key campaign message is that *without taxes, vital services disappear*.

Under this broad theme, the SACOSS election campaign and platform is divided into four areas:

- A fair and sustainable revenue base to ensure that there is enough money to fund vital services and that everyone pays a fair share of tax
- Cost of living relief (see separate article)
- Key social justice policies including in Housing, Health, Justice, and Social and Economic Participation
- Community services sector support, including addressing contracting of services and red tape reduction (see separate article).

The campaign for a fair, simple and sustainable state tax system was launched at our AGM in November, and was accompanied by some paid media advertising. We have also developed a basic information flyer and will be letterboxing a postcard to households in two key electorates in the run up to the election.

SACOSS' 12 point Cost of Living Relief Package was released in early December with support from key sector organisations, and further media statements are planned on this and on the other policy areas in the platform.

SACOSS has provided our whole platform to the Premier, Leader of the Opposition, and to representatives of all the parliamentary parties. We will be contacting all parties regularly throughout the campaign to ensure that the concerns of our sector and the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged people are fully considered in the election period.

SACOSS will be assessing the policies of all parties in relation our platform. Our analysis of the parties' policies will be on our website, and we hope to publish a final report card in the last week of the election. While SACOSS is non-partisan, we believe it is important both to raise issues in the election and to inform the electorate of where those wanting to be elected stand in relation to those issues.

### Support the SACOSS Election Campaign

**Donate** to the SACOSS campaign

**Volunteer** to letterbox our "Without taxes, vital services disappear" postcards

**Attend** the SACOSS Conference 2014 - Taxing Times: Sustaining Vital Services (see inside back cover)

For more information, please contact Dr Greg Ogle at [greg@sacoss.org.au](mailto:greg@sacoss.org.au) or 8305 4229.

Concessions TAFE Mental Health Health Promotion  
Legal Aid Emergency Relief Rehab Services  
Foster Care Public Events  
Health Care Prisons  
**Without taxes,  
vital services disappear** Trains  
Primary Schools Counselling Public Housing  
Police Disability Support Buses Financial Assistance  
Hospitals Arts Universities  
Nursing Courts Fire Fighters Victim Support  
Family Support Aboriginal Services National Parks



# Summary of the SACOSS Election Platform Proposals

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## A Fair and Sustainable Tax Base

1. Restore state government revenue to pre-GFC levels (as a % of Gross State Product) in the next term of government.

## Key Social Justice Policies

### Cost of Living Relief

2. Implement at least half of the measures in the SACOSS Cost of Living Relief package in the first term of government.

### Housing

3. Increase and improve the stock of affordable housing and of social housing in particular, including by:

- a. Mandating and enforcing that the requirement for new large housing developments to have 15% affordable housing should consist of 5% for affordable home ownership, 5% for affordable rental (under NRAS), and 5% for high needs rental clients
- b. Transferring title (not just management) of stock from Housing SA to the community housing sector
- c. Mandating universal aged-appropriate design standards for new developments to increase stock of appropriate housing for those with special needs.

### Health

4. Recommit to population health and preventative approaches, evidenced by:

- a. Resourcing for local councils to implement Regional Public Health Plans;
- b. Restoring funding to all primary health programs cut since the McCann Report unless there is clear evidence of Commonwealth funding of program areas in SA

5. Develop and implement a new five year plan for Mental Health in South Australia.

### Social and Economic Participation

6. Implement a package of measures to assist in transition out of child support for those in the child protection system, including by:

- a. Ensuring availability of programs around being a successful young person (eg. life skills, building community connection, navigating adult support system);
- b. Establishing an end point for child protection and support based on individual circumstances and readiness, not an arbitrary age (currently 18), including:

- i. Maintaining financial support for foster parents after age of 18

- ii. Maintaining financial support for NGO services after age of 18 to ensure continuity of services and emotional support.

7. Support asylum seekers currently in our community, including through:

- a. Seeking an exemption from the Federal Government to allow asylum seekers in SA to work;
- b. Funding for fully supported volunteer work programs for those unable to find work; and
- c. Allowing asylum seekers to get assistance from Housing SA and other state government agencies where the Federal government has not been able to provide suitable housing and support.

### Law and Justice

8. Set a target to reduce the prison population by 10% of sentenced prisoners and 20% of remandees, including by:

- a. Increasing funding and use of diversionary courts and processes, especially in the youth area where the benchmark should be that no youth should be in detention simply because of homelessness or child protection issues;
- b. Implementing bail accommodation services for the general population promised in the last budget, and developing parallel youth-specific bail accommodation services; and
- c. Reviewing criminal legislation in light of the target to reduce the number of crimes with custodial sentences and to reduce length of sentences where appropriate.

9. Establish an independent or court-based auditing and enforcement system to ensure that the government is actually providing the diversionary and support programs ordered by the court or parole boards.

### Community Services Sector Support

10. Pass the proposed Statutes Amendment (Commonwealth Registered Entities) Bill 2013 to recognise the ACNC and remove duplication of reporting.

11. Mandate 3 + 3 + 3 years as the default funding model for all programs addressing long term needs and implement at least 50% of SACOSS' Better Contracting and Red Tape Reduction Plan in the first term of government.



## Cost of Living Update No. 16 & Cost of Living Election Package

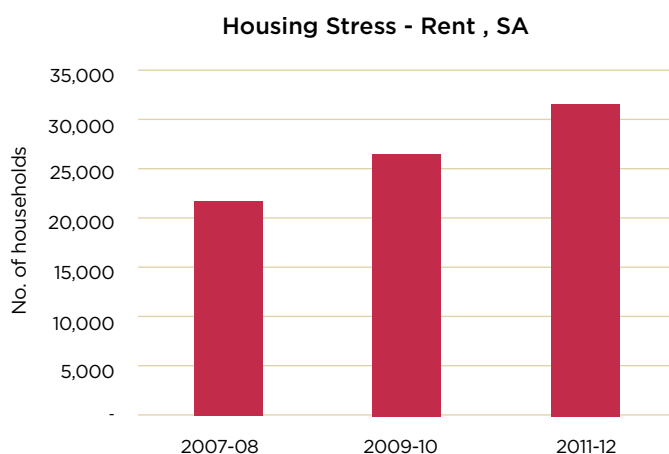
Dr Greg Ogle

SACOSS Senior Policy & Research Analyst

SACOSS' most recent *Cost of Living Update* focuses on housing. The report, based on data from the September Quarter 2013, highlights widespread housing stress and positions housing costs as a key election issue.

According to ABS data, 15.4% of South Australian households are experiencing housing stress in their weekly budget, that is, they are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. That equates to over 100,000 South Australian households, while approximately 22,000 households are spending more than half their income on housing, which clearly leaves too little room for all the other necessary expenditures.

The SACOSS report also breaks down the housing stress data by Local Government Area, finding that among the 40 largest LGAs, the highest levels of housing stress were in Adelaide City (25.6% of households), followed by Playford (21.9%), Salisbury (19.6%) and Port Adelaide Enfield (19.2%).



Housing stress is a well-known indicator of hardship and an important indicator of risk of homelessness, especially for low income households. It is particularly alarming that the numbers of low income renters in housing stress have been rising in recent years and SACOSS is calling on the state government to take action to support struggling households.

A key initiative being proposed by SACOSS is the establishment of a Housing Stress Emergency Payment Fund. This would provide early intervention to keep people in housing. The Fund would offer a one-off means tested payment of up to 4 weeks either rent or mortgage

(interest) payment where there is an immediate threat of homelessness and a qualified financial counsellor is engaged and believes that homelessness could be averted by the temporary payment. It would provide a temporary boost for struggling families, but if it supports people to stay in housing it is a far better outcome than seeing a family lose their home and then have to be provided with crisis services and deal with all the stresses and dysfunctionality of homelessness.

The SACOSS report also highlights the need to expand and improve the stock of social housing. This public and community housing underlies access to affordable housing for many vulnerable South Australians, but it is a great concern that almost one in five households in public housing are experiencing housing stress despite rents being capped at 25% of income. This arises from previous debts (eg. rent arrears or damage payments), the repayments of which are not included in the cap.

Whatever the reasons, where there are nearly 2,800 households in public housing paying more than 50% of their income for housing, there is clearly something wrong with our housing safety net. It is a recipe for homelessness, and is unacceptable. Where there is no hope that those debts can be paid and such repayments are only leading to further hardship, there is clearly a case for some form of moratorium.

The proposed Housing Stress Emergency Payment Fund and the moratorium on collection of unpayable Housing SA debt (both on recommendation of a financial counsellor) form part of a comprehensive Cost of Living Relief package SACOSS is putting forward for consideration by all parties in the state election (see page opposite).

Beyond housing issues, the SACOSS Cost of Living Update found that in the year to September 2013, cost of living for households on base level government income support went up less than income. This broke a run of 8 quarters in a row where benefits slipped behind cost of living increases. However, the "windfall" for welfare recipients was only \$1.31 per week.

The December Cost of Living Report will be released in February 2014 following the release of the ABS source data.

SACOSS *Cost of Living Updates* are available on the new SACOSS website at: [sacoss.org.au/reports/cost-living](http://sacoss.org.au/reports/cost-living)

## Cost of Living Relief Package

SACOSS' quarterly *Cost of Living Updates* have consistently shown that while many households are hit with price rises in areas like utilities, low income households are particularly struggling to make ends meet. On average they spend proportionately more of their income on current housing costs and on basic necessities like food, electricity and water – all of which have been going up faster than the general inflation rate (and therefore faster than CPI-pegged incomes such as Newstart, Youth Allowance and many low income wages). Low income households also have fewer resources available to cope with rising prices, unexpected bills or other financial stresses.

*SACOSS is proposing a Cost of Living Relief Package to relieve pressure on the most vulnerable South Australian households.*



**Above:** SACOSS Executive Director Ross Womersley, joined by Uniting Communities, Salvation Army SA, Anglicare SA, Baptist Care, Lutheran Community Care, to launch the Cost of Living Relief Package to the media on 11 December, 2013.

### Housing

- Establishment of a Housing Stress Emergency Payment Fund to prevent homelessness
- Establishment of a moratorium on collection of rent arrears for people in public housing on recommendation from financial counsellors where debt cannot be paid

### Utilities

- Change of Energy Concession to a percentage of bill (capped) rather than fixed amount
- Third Party decision on any electricity disconnection
- Expansion of existing medical heating/cooling concession
- Establishment of an "EEPS-equivalent" scheme for telecommunications

### Transport

- Increase and index payments under the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme
- Free off-peak Public Transport between 9am and 3pm
- Increase and index the Access Cabs Subsidy

### Debt

- Establishment of a "Good Money" shopfront for integrated low-income support services
- Establishment of a "Debt Deduct" type scheme
- Implementation of the agreed funding of consumer credit legal services

SACOSS hopes that in the context of the 2014 South Australian State Election, all political parties will consider this package and commit to implementing at least half of the cost of living relief measures in the first term of government.



# Red Tape Reduction — Essential Policy or Unattainable Myth?

**Evelyn O'Loughlin**

CEO, Volunteering SA & NT

Much has been written about the need for 'Red Tape' reduction in transactions between government and the Not-for-Profit (NFP) sector. It is a goal that has received widespread support over many years from all sides of politics.

I am confident that our sector recognises and supports the need for accountability and the collection of essential information under grant funding arrangements. But ask any NFP and they'll highlight the diversity of application and reporting required both within and between government agencies, and between different levels of government. In my organisation, 8 staff spent a combined total of 24 weeks in the last financial year undertaking government grant acquittals!

Application and reporting requirements are also not always proportional with the amount of funding received. For instance, HACC-funded organisations need to meet the same onerous requirements whether they are a volunteer run entity receiving \$10,000 per annum or a large NFP receiving \$500,000. Similarly, the federal Volunteer Grants Program for small grants up to \$5,000 has guidance documents that cover 20 pages and an 11 page application form!

## Federal Reform

The 2010 Productivity Commission Review of the Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector highlighted the adverse impact of inadequate government contracting processes on the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, including overly prescriptive requirements, increased micro management and inappropriately short-term contracts.

The last federal government had an ambitious NFP reform agenda and I was optimistic when in late December 2010, I was appointed to the 13 member Not-for-Profit Sector Reform Council. The Council's role was to support the implementation of smarter regulation, improved transparency and accountability, reduce red tape and advise on the implementation of the PC Review recommendations.

I eagerly joined the Council's Working Group on Reducing Red Tape, where we identified a number of areas for improvement in grants and funding mechanisms; standard agreements, and financial and performance reporting. Other red tape reduction initiatives focussed on harmonising and simplifying Federal and State NFP regulation in areas such as fundraising. We also advised on long awaited Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) – the new national regulator.

Unfortunately, since the September 2013 election the NFP Reform process at the federal level has faltered, although in recent speeches the Minister for Human Services, Kevin Andrews, has emphasised that his policy priority is to empower not-for-profits and reduce government interference and red tape.

## South Australia

In April 2012, South Australia completed a two-phase red tape reduction program that has reportedly reduced red tape costs for small business by around \$320 million per annum. The not-for-profit sector has been an important focus of the second phase of the program.

Two major initiatives have been rolled out as a result of the Commonwealth and state government efforts – a Standard Chart of Accounts agreed by COAG and Standardised Grant Agreements for grants below \$100,000 across state government.

The SA government also promised to amend its incorporated associations and charitable collections legislation to streamline and harmonise reporting and licence requirements for charities registered with the ACNC. However, the proposed legislation has not progressed and *all parties need to commit to passing it early in the term of the new parliament.*

Since 2009, the Stronger Together Agreement (STA) has seen the state government and the health and community services sector working towards reform that strengthens policy development and service delivery outcomes, including initiatives to reduce duplication and increase outcomes, such as a Common Master Agreement and Service Agreements.

The STA is underpinned by the Human Services Partnership Forum (formerly Human Services Peaks Forum), consisting of 20 representative NFP organisations led by SACOSS, 6 government agencies and the Local Government Association. Through its working group on Not-For-Profit Sector & Government Partnership, it advises on co-design, co-planning, procurement and co-delivery and has made a number of recommendations on red tape reduction, including the development of whole-of-government Grant Guidelines for SA similar to Commonwealth Grant Guidelines.

Most recently, the state government launched "**Simplify**" ([saplan.org.au/simplify](http://saplan.org.au/simplify)), a red tape reduction initiative that is seeking 100 fresh ideas from the community and the public sector workforce to make government more efficient, and thereby creating a better public service for South Australians.



# Better Contracting and Red Tape Reduction for Community Services

## Contracting and Funding

1. Adoption of a 3 years + 3 yrs + 3 yrs as the default length of contract unless the issue being addressed by the service will be dealt with and/or the need disappears in a shorter period.
2. Ensuring all contracts specify Department responsibilities and obligations as well as those of the service providers and should include Departmental obligations around communication and timelines and penalties for non-compliance.
3. Ensuring payments are made on-time with penalty rates applying for late payment
4. Automatic indexation in all contracts, including CPI adjustments and payments for meeting the Equal Remuneration Order (Fair Pay) case outcomes.
5. Implementation of simple low risk grants processes for contracts under \$100,000 per year.
6. Providing a minimum 6 months' notice regarding whether long term contracts are going to be renewed to prevent loss of staff and ensure continuity of service and care for program users.

## Tendering Process

7. Using Master Agreements and standards accreditation (eg. Australian Service Excellence Standards) to streamline tender application and assessment, including recognising the capacities and benchmarks evident in these agreements and accreditation and therefore allowing for:
  - Skipping questions on applications which are already covered in accreditations;
  - No replication in service contracts of information already provided in relation to the Master Agreement; and
  - Organisations with Master Agreements to be able bring innovative ideas to government for funding without tender and subsequent loss of intellectual property.
8. Increasing use of a two-step process with an initial, brief expression of interest with full tenders only required from the short-list of applicants.
9. Mandating a six week minimum period for tenders to be lodged, and establishing a benchmark for government to decide and announce successful tender applications of not more than the time allocated for putting in tender applications (and in any case a maximum of 3 months).

10. Making online submissions available for all tender applications with ease-to-use forms that have full MS Word functionality.

11. Providing longer lead-in time for contract negotiations with the timetable to be agreed by the government and the successful applicant.

## Reporting and Accountability

12. Establishing proper performance reporting and performance management processes that are agreed on by funding bodies and organisations as appropriate measures of outcomes and, where relevant, outputs.
13. Ceasing quarterly and six-monthly financial acquittals (except in extraordinary circumstances) and utilise annual audit of accounts to confirm expenditure in line with contracts.
14. Establishing a Community Sector Commissioner parallel to the Small Business Commissioner to audit government compliance with contracting guidelines and contract terms.

## Consistency Across Government

15. Establishing whole-of-government grant guidelines along the lines of the Commonwealth Grants Guidelines to drive red-tape reduction, including by requiring that departments not ask for information already in the possession of government.
16. Adopting of consistent reporting templates across all State Government departments.
17. Extending the role of electronic centralised data to underpin the "report once, use often" system.

## Support Programs

18. Supporting and funding a trial of the consolidation of service agreements for larger organisations that have multiple service agreements in order to determine how difficult this would be and what savings might be available from consolidation.
19. Establishing Program/Project Officers as the primary point of contact and authority of a contract over the life of a contracted service (rather than the Procurement Department) as Project Officers have the relevant expertise in the service area.
20. Funding a "tender-ready" program for small to medium and Aboriginal-run organisations similar to the \$60K program funded through Business SA for the commercial sector to allow small-medium and Aboriginal run organisations to better compete in tender processes.



# Sorry To Cut You Off...

Andrew Nance

There's nothing quite like having the power cut off to remind a struggling household that they really are not keeping up with everyone else. SACOSS has been deliberately active on energy issues for well over a decade and one of the fundamental reasons for our continued activity is the impact of having your power cut off.

In our latest report on the subject, *Keeping The Power On – A SACOSS Response to Electricity Disconnections*, we have highlighted that while the Energy Market Rules are clear that disconnections must only be a 'last resort' for energy retailers, the number of households that are falling off the edges of the market continues to increase<sup>1</sup>.

And there are plenty of indications that the energy businesses continue to struggle to discriminate between those who *can't pay* and those who *won't pay*. This elusive distinction has always been in the policy and regulatory debate on disconnections. In many ways it is just another variation on a theme in the public discourse on all matters of poverty: bludgers.

In South Australia, around 1 in every hundred households will be disconnected for unpaid electricity bills every year. Around half of these will reconnect in the same name at the same address each year – indicating, at least, a willingness to pay rather than to be one of the 'skippers' that leave an address with unpaid bills or transfer to a new supplier under a different name. In the last two financial years this number has grown to around 5,000 households per annum and is now at a rate not seen since the period just after the household electricity market was opened up for competition on January 1st 2003 and prices jumped by 25%.

In the *Keeping The Power On* report we have analysed data from a range of sources and identified some disturbing trends:

- Some retailers appear to be much better at keeping households connected than others;
- The safety nets are not working: the level of arrears being accrued by some households is clearly unsustainable – there is mounting evidence that energy bills are becoming simply unaffordable.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that households with children are highly represented in, and highly impacted by, having their power cut off.

SACOSS has put forward a number of recommendations on what can be done. A central proposal is a mechanism of third-party review before a disconnection can proceed. Parallels can be drawn to the role of the Residential Tenancies Tribunal in evicting renters. There are options for the precise mechanism – it could, for example, mean an expanded role for the Energy and Water Ombudsman Scheme (EWOSA) – but the intent is quite clear: to test the assertion that each impending disconnection really is the last resort and, if so, establish a mechanism to refer the household to the supports and social services that can get them reconnected.

The other area requiring attention is that of concessions. According to the 2012-13 Annual Report of the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI), the \$165 per annum energy concession was distributed to 205,000 recipients via their electricity retailer – a total value of around \$34m.

The Emergency Electricity Payment Scheme (EEPS) provides a one-off payment of up to \$400. In 2012-13 the scheme received 1084 applications and provided 849 payments. At most, this equates to \$340,000.

The Medical Heating and Cooling Concession of \$165 per annum was introduced on 1 January 2012 as an additional payment available to those on a low income who have a clinically assessed, qualifying medical condition. From the 2011-12 and 2012-13 DCSI Annual Reports it appears that around 2,240 applications have been approved by the department. The total value of these is therefore around \$370,000 per annum.

These combined energy concessions therefore total \$34.5m per annum.

<sup>1</sup> Available from [www.sacoss.org.au/reports/energy-water](http://www.sacoss.org.au/reports/energy-water)



To put this in context, according to the Australian Energy Regulator's Annual Report on the Performance of the Retail Energy Market 2012-13, the arrears of residential electricity and gas customers at the end of the year was in the order of \$32m. This is exclusive of the debt owed by customers on a retailer hardship program. The AER does not report these amounts directly but we have estimated these to be well in excess of \$5m.

Combined, residential energy debt – the amount owed to retailers by households that have been outstanding for 90 days or more – is therefore in excess of the entire concessions budget. This debt is reportedly owed on around 60,000 residential accounts while the concession is applied to over 200,000 accounts – but we don't know how many of those in debt receive a concession.

Further, there are around 6,500 households participating in a retailer hardship program while DCSI report approving 849 EEPs applications in 2012-13. The AER reports suggest that the average debt of a hardship customer is in the order of \$1000 so an EEPs payment of \$400 would be very welcome but is likely to still leave significant arrears for many.

In November 2013, SACOSS supported the release of *Relative Energy Poverty in Australia*, a research report that examined the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2009-10 Household Expenditure Survey in order to identify those households with the biggest energy bills but the least capacity to pay for them<sup>2</sup>.

The analysis took housing costs into account in order to reveal those most at risk of being unable to afford to keep the power on. Households most at risk include single parent households, renters and people living alone, especially aged and disability pensioners.

Importantly, in relation to concessions, close to one quarter of those considered most at risk were wage and salary earners – a group largely ineligible for the state's energy concession. And further, the report confirmed that even when corrected for household size, households who use mains or bottled gas have significantly bigger bills than equivalent 'all-electric' households – yet the energy concession is applied as a fixed amount to electricity bills only.

2 Available from [www.sacoss.org.au/reports/energy-water](http://www.sacoss.org.au/reports/energy-water)

So, even without dwelling on the September 2013 media reports of serious issues with the concessions database<sup>3</sup> it is clear that there is plenty of scope for refining the targeting and value of assistance provided to energy consumers.

Even the Productivity Commission agrees that energy is an essential service, necessary to provide a basic standard of living<sup>4</sup>. Energy consumers are afforded protections beyond those offered under generic consumer protection legislation. Yet, there are clear signs that the safety nets in operation in South Australia's energy market are failing to keep a large and growing number of households connected to this essential service.

This is very much the pointy end of the 'cost of living' debate. Shopping around for a 'better deal' on your energy bills is certainly worth doing but a few percent here or there simply does not cut it for these households.

The residential energy market in South Australia has a turnover of around \$1.5 billion per annum and governments, oppositions, regulators and energy businesses must be held to account over the shared responsibilities of delivering essential services.

Andrew Nance has been involved with the SACOSS energy program in various roles since 2002 and is currently contracted to do the nerd work of data analysis, research and submission writing.

Andrew authored *Relative Energy Policy in Australia* as part of his PhD studies and can be contacted at [andrew@stkittsassociates.com.au](mailto:andrew@stkittsassociates.com.au)

3 Kevin Naughton for InDaily 24 and 25 September 2013 *One in five receiving concessions "ineligible" and Manual checking move in concessions bungle* reported the findings of the Auditor General and IT Consultants that raised concerns about the administration of concessions. Refer to <http://indaily.com.au/news/2013/09/25/manual-checking-move-in-concessions-bungle/>

4 Productivity Commission, *Review of Australia's Consumer Policy Framework, Report: Volume 2*, pp 108-109, May 2008.



## ACNC – Worth Fighting For?

**Dr Greg Ogle**

**SACOSS Senior Policy & Research Analyst**

The new national charities regulator, the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) has been running for just over a year, but its future is in doubt with the Liberal government being elected last year with a promise to abolish the ACNC and replace it with a “Centre for Excellence” to support and advise the sector and government.

The ACNC was established after many years of lobbying from the not-for-profit sector and a raft of government inquiries and reports recommending the establishment of a purpose-built regulator. It is fair to say that the original draft legislation to establish the ACNC was not what we wanted in a regulator. However, after much lobbying, re-drafting, and negotiation through the parliamentary processes, the ACNC was created with a regulatory framework which includes a mandate to support and sustain a robust and independent not-for-profit sector and to reduce red-tape.

In its first year the ACNC did a huge amount of work to consult and establish reporting mechanisms, develop governance information and support for charities, and to establish a single, publicly accessible database of charities – a huge step for transparency, and in the long run, a great tool for sector organising and development. It is true that the new reporting requirements add a layer of red-tape in the first instance, but it is now up to state governments to bring their own legislation to remove duplication. The state legislation is simple to develop and should be passed quickly.

The ACNC has enjoyed great support from our sector. A survey of the sector last year by Pro Bono Australia found 81% support for the new regulator, and regulation by the ACNC was 7 times more popular than the previous regime of regulation under the tax office (ATO). This is crucial because abolishing the ACNC does not mean less regulation, it means a return to regulation by the ATO or ASIC. For those who remember the politically-motivated ATO audits of advocacy organisations in 2004 and 2005, or who object to the fundamental conflict of interest of the ATO being tax collector and regulator of tax concessions, this is not a welcome prospect.

But it is not done deal. It may be government policy to abolish the ACNC, but that requires legislative change and it is not clear that it would be supported in Senate. Having driven its establishment, Labor and the Greens obviously support the ACNC, and in the lead-up to the election federal Senator Nick Xenophon expressed his support for the regulator. Senator-elect Bob Day said he would not do anything to harm the sector, and the views of the other minor party senators are unknown. And do we really think that if our sector mobilised to support better regulation, that the government would want to take on the sector and a potentially hostile Senate over this issue?

So the real question for our sector is, do we want to fight to keep a purpose-built regulator with a mandate to support the sector, or do we just roll over?





## Opinion

From David Crosbie, *"A Charitable View of the First 100 Days of Government?"*  
Pro Bono Australia News, 17 December 2013.

The government has displayed a myopic determination to dismantle the highly regarded Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC) and replace it with an unknown bureaucratic equivalent to be housed in a government department somewhere else. Their position ignores extensive expert and sector consultation and key recommendations of the Productivity Commission Review.

The achievements of the ACNC over the first 12 months are very impressive by any measure, but especially when you consider it costs less than \$14 million a year to run, and it replaces many government officials who previously performed similar functions less effectively and efficiently.

Why would you demolish this regulator and return to the bad old days of the ATO acting as both a collector of government revenue and a regulator of charities? Not even the ATO wants that to happen.

The proposed new government created and funded "Centre of Excellence" within the social services bureaucracy seems contrary to the policy goal of encouraging sector leadership.



# Creating A Dementia Friendly South Australia

**Kathryn Cunningham**  
CEO, Alzheimer's SA



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South Australians are living with a dementia epidemic. There are 26,000 South Australians living with dementia, an average of over 500 per state electorate. Nearly 40 of these are people living with younger onset dementia, under 65 years of age.

Each week there are 123 new cases of dementia in South Australia. This is expected to grow to 536 new cases each week by 2050. More than 50% of residents in Australian government-subsidised aged care facilities have dementia.

An estimated 87,000 South Australians are caring for someone living with dementia. On average, symptoms of dementia are noticed by families three years before a firm diagnosis is made.

Dementia is the single greatest cause of disability in South Australians over 65 and the third leading cause of disability burden overall. Dementia is the third leading cause of death.

Total direct health and aged care system expenditure on people living with dementia in South Australia was at least \$355 million in 2009-10. Dementia will become the third greatest source of health and residential aged care spending within two decades, costing around 1% of GDP.



## Creating a Dementia Friendly South Australia

Creating a dementia friendly state starts in the homes of people living with dementia; moving out through their streets, suburbs and councils to the whole state.

Alzheimer's Australia SA is challenging election candidates to consider the importance, to people living with dementia and their families, of a friendly home, a friendly street, a friendly suburb, a friendly council and a friendly state to live in.

Alzheimer's Australia SA is challenging candidates to understand that dementia is both a public health challenge and a social issue. We need a system of support which respects choice and promotes social inclusion for people with dementia rather than institutionalisation and isolation.

Creating a dementia friendly state demands actions focussing not only the need for appropriate care and support but also on social engagement; to ensure people living with dementia receive the respect and access to services that we expect for all South Australians.

The transformation to make South Australia a dementia friendly state is dependent on action to:

- Improve the awareness of dementia, dementia education and dementia risk reduction across the general community.
- Achieve timely diagnosis.
- Support people living with dementia from the moment of diagnosis, including services which give both the person with dementia and the family carer opportunities for social engagement.
- Improve access to quality dementia care in the home, in hospitals and in residential care.

Alzheimer's Australia SA is challenging candidates to offer a Whole of State Dementia Action Plan that addresses the dementia epidemic and seeks to make South Australia the first dementia friendly state in Australia.



# SACOSS Utilities Update



**Jo De Silva**  
SACOSS Senior  
Policy Officer



**Bronwyn Colby**  
SACOSS Policy Officer

## Banning the Power Cut Off

SACOSS continues the campaign to stop people having their power cut off due to an inability to pay. In the last few months, SACOSS has maintained the momentum with meetings with MPs, departmental representatives, regulators and industry. We've also released a major research project *Keeping the Power On: A SACOSS Response to Electricity Disconnections* – visit our new look website to view a copy.

## Submissions

SACOSS has also continued to engage with energy industry stakeholders on a variety of topics. Energy related submissions for September to December 2013 include:

1. Establishing a Stakeholder Engagement Framework and a Consumer Engagement Guideline for Service Providers (Australian Energy Regulator)
2. Review of retailer feed-in tariffs for solar PV customers post deregulated electricity prices (Essential Services Commission of South Australia)
3. Review of the Residential Energy Efficiency Program (Department of Manufacturing, Innovation, Trade, Resources and Energy)
4. Review of South Australia's water heater installation requirements (Department of Manufacturing, Innovation, Trade, Resources and Energy)
5. Establishing the Australian Energy Consumers Organisation (Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism)
6. Preliminary consultation on electricity 'side constraints' (side constraints limit the annual amount of change in revenue for each tariff class) (Department of Manufacturing, Innovation, Trade, Resources and Energy)
7. Advice on linking the reliability standard and reliability settings to the value of customer reliability in the electricity market (Australian Energy Market Commission)
8. Review of the National Energy Retail Law, in particular consumer protections (Essential Services Commission of South Australia)

Detailed information on these submissions is available at [sacoss.org.au/submissions/energy-water](http://sacoss.org.au/submissions/energy-water)





## Consumer Advocacy Research Fund for Water (CARF)

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion has commenced the process of allocating funding for water advocacy and research through the CARF. Advocacy and research funded through the CARF will help shape the agenda for water pricing reform in South Australia. SACOSS has already contributed to ESCOSA's Inquiry into Drinking Water and Sewerage Retail Services Pricing Reform and will continue to monitor developments in this space.

## National Consumer Roundtable on Energy

SACOSS has successfully secured funding to organise and host a series of three National Consumer Roundtables on Energy. These meetings help shape the agenda for energy advocacy nationally and provide a unique opportunity for energy advocates to collaborate on national and jurisdictional energy issues that are pivotal to residential energy consumers.

The first of the series was recently held in Sydney and included delegates representing community and environmental interests for South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, ACT, Queensland and Western Australia. Guest speakers included representatives from the Australian Energy Regulator, the Australian Energy Market Commission and the Australian Energy Market Operator who provided information on the state of the energy market, market performance and energy regulation and policy. A highlight of this 2-day event was identifying opportunities for engagement between these energy industry representatives and the Roundtable.

### Photos from the Roundtable

- 1 L-R **Oliver Derum** - Public Interest Advocacy Centre  
**Paul Smith** - Chief Executive, Australian Energy Market Commission
- 2 L-R **Brian Spalding** - Commissioner, Australian Energy Market Commission  
**Gavin Dufty** - St Vincent de Paul Victoria  
**Lee Mercieca** - St Vincent de Paul NSW  
**Janine Rayner** - Consumer Action Law Centre
- 3 L-R **Jo De Silva** - SACOSS  
**Lukas Rajnoch** - St Vincent de Paul NSW  
**John Pierce** - Commission Chairman, Australian Energy Market Commission

### Key themes identified for future work by the Roundtable

- Energy affordability and the safety net
- The future of the Roundtable (and how it might link to the establishment of a National Energy Advocacy Body)
- Energy efficiency programs, advocacy and policy
- Gas advocacy (in response to the forecast of increasing gas prices)
- Smart meters - consumer costs and protections
- Energy tariffs

SACOSS would like to acknowledge that this Roundtable was made possible by funding from the Consumer Advocacy Panel.



## Small Change and Big Changes to Our Website

**Marnie Round**  
SACOSS Communications Officer

Our radio program Small Change continues to share stories of achievement, passion and trying times, Tuesdays at 6pm on Radio Adelaide.

### Small Change highlights from the past couple of months.

We reported on the first research done into the status of ngangkari traditional Aboriginal healers in Australia and the subsequent establishment of the first corporation for ngangkari healers in the APY Lands.

[radio.adelaide.edu.au/hand-in-hand-part-1/](http://radio.adelaide.edu.au/hand-in-hand-part-1/)

Matt Scales from ZeroWaste SA joined us to talk about the new ShareNSave initiative, which helps South Australians to find and share services, resources, and events in their local communities to tackle the cost of living and improve neighbourhood networks.

[radio.adelaide.edu.au/share-n-save/](http://radio.adelaide.edu.au/share-n-save/)

Adam Mooney CEO of Good Shepherd Microfinance joined us to explain the difference between microfinance and pay-day lending services and what the outcomes are for people at risk of financial hardship and crisis.

[radio.adelaide.edu.au/instant-money-or-microfinance/](http://radio.adelaide.edu.au/instant-money-or-microfinance/)

With the sudden closure of the Alcohol & Other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA), we spoke to ADCA CEO David Templeman about the uncertain future of the Council and the social implications this will have.

[radio.adelaide.edu.au/the-uncertain-future-of-adca/](http://radio.adelaide.edu.au/the-uncertain-future-of-adca/)

Our friends at Anangu Lands Paper Tracker radio show talked to us about the importance of accessible information in communities and what impacts the show is having in the APY Lands.

[radio.adelaide.edu.au/tracking-the-paper-trail/](http://radio.adelaide.edu.au/tracking-the-paper-trail/)

And Greg is always grouching about something. That's why he has his very own weekly segment, Greg's Grumbles. Listen to his grumble about Australian wars.

[radio.adelaide.edu.au/gregs-grumbles-16/](http://radio.adelaide.edu.au/gregs-grumbles-16/)

You can listen to and download all our podcasts at [radio.adelaide.edu.au/program/small-change](http://radio.adelaide.edu.au/program/small-change)

Like Small Change on Facebook where we share our podcasts and other stories and ideas of interest [facebook.com/smallchangeradio](https://www.facebook.com/smallchangeradio)

And follow us on Twitter @SACOSSradio

### Marnie wins Radio Adelaide Presenter of the Year! by Ross Womersley

What a joy it was to join the gang at the Radio Adelaide 2013 graduation, awards and xmas party and what a wonderful acknowledgement for Small Change when **our very own Marnie was awarded favourite presenter of the year** – an award determined by her peers. In just 6 months Marnie has managed to ensure Small Change established itself as a fabulous new programme in the Radio Adelaide mix. Its a great

medium for encouraging deeper discussion of things we are passionate about and I really encourage you to listen in. You can see a beautiful picture of the award winner on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/SACOSS> which is our latest addition to our social media suite of communication strategies.

So well deserved. Great job and congratulations Marnie.



### New SACOSS website

If you haven't visited the SACOSS website in the last couple of months, you'll be in for a great surprise. It's been primped, preened, prettified, and looks completely sparkly and new. But aside from its good looks (wit, intelligence, sensitivity too?), it's an easy to navigate site that contains a huge amount of information, resources, publications and links that you should find useful and interesting.

Check it out at [sacoss.org.au](http://sacoss.org.au)

**SACOSS**  
South Australian Council  
of Social Service

**SMALL CHANGE**

Justice, Opportunity  
and Shared Wealth for  
All South Australians

Tuesdays 6pm on

101.5fm  
**Radio Adelaide**  
DIGITAL

Tuesdays 6pm on Radio Adelaide -  
online, digital and 101.5fm

**Small Change** brings you news, analysis  
and discussion as we share the voices of  
poverty, social justice, opportunity and  
community based achievement in South  
Australia.

Listen to or download podcasts at  
[radio.adelaide.edu.au/program/small-change/](http://radio.adelaide.edu.au/program/small-change/)

@SACOSSradio

Got a question? Anything we should  
be following up? Contact Marnie Round  
SACOSS Communications Officer

e. [marnie@sacoss.org.au](mailto:marnie@sacoss.org.au)  
p. (08) 8305 4227





# Healthy Workers Healthy Futures Update

**Kate Kameniar**  
Healthy Workers Adviser



The Workplace Physical Activity Challenge was a joint initiative of SACOSS and the Australian Services Union. Workplaces from the non-government health and community services sector took on the

challenge to promote physical activity in the workplace during the month of October.

We had a fantastic response and some great initiatives, including, workplaces taking part in Ride to Work Day; lunch time walking; pedometer challenges; a table tennis challenge; and encouragement for desk based staff to take breaks from sitting.

Congratulations to Red Cross who won the first prize of \$500 towards their next healthy workplace initiative and Neami National Seacliff Branch who won the second prize of \$100 worth of fruit delivered to the workplace.

## Neami National Seacliff Team Walking Group – 2nd prize winner

The Neami Team Walking Group was open to all staff located at the Seacliff worksite. The goals of the project were to increase staff physical activity and raise awareness of the benefits of regular activity.

All staff were involved from the planning stage and half an hour was allocated every week after the team meeting for the team to walk to the beach and back. Time was provided at the end of each meeting to prepare for the walk including changing into appropriate shoes and applying sunscreen. The team discussed the walk at each team meeting and majority of staff chose to take part.

The team walks have been incredibly successful with staff enjoying the benefits of incorporating physical activity into their workday, getting fresh air and taking a break from work. It has also proven to be a great opportunity for team building and a chance to role model healthy behaviours within the team and to the clients they support. Staff have committed to continuing their weekly walks long term.





Photo by Marnie Round

## Red Cross 2013 Table Tennis Championships – 1st prize winner

The 2013 Red Cross Table Tennis Championships were open to all staff and volunteers at the Red Cross Head Office. The goals of the challenge were to increase physical activity, social engagement, connectedness and to have fun!

The Championships ran over three weeks during lunchtime with separate categories of Men's Singles, Women's Singles, Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles. A staff member with experience playing competitive table tennis volunteered to umpire and staff self-nominated and formed teams. A leader board was kept on the café window and the games were publicised daily to encourage others to come and watch during their lunch break. An award ceremony was held on the final day of the competition, and the Executive Director presented the trophies to the winning teams.

Attendance at the trophy presentation was so high that the group only just fitted in the new Café named Encounter Bay – a testament to the fun and mateship shown through the competition. This was an incredibly successful and engaging staff wellbeing initiative. Sixty two people entered the competition and staff decided to keep the competition going. The competition was great fun and created interaction across teams.

**Red Cross has committed to an ongoing focus on staff health and wellbeing including development of a comprehensive wellbeing plan for 2014 that will be developed by the social and wellbeing committee.**

## Healthy Workers Healthy Futures Initiative

The Healthy Workers Healthy Futures initiative is an SA Health strategy funded by the Australian Government under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health. The initiative encourages managers and workers to create workplaces that foster and support healthy lifestyles.

For a free appointment with the SACOSS Healthy Workers Adviser contact Kate Kameniar by phone **(08) 8305 4231** or email [katek@sacoss.org.au](mailto:katek@sacoss.org.au)

# News from Marjorie Black House

Since the last edition, SACOSS has been working on a number of issues and submissions, including:

- Launching our 2014 state election campaign platforms
- Report in response to electricity disconnections in South Australia
- Report on relative energy poverty in South Australia
- Guidelines for peaks funding under the Family and Community Development Program
- Research on independence of the not-for-profit sector

## And also in the pipeline...

- SACOSS Conference 2014 – February 11, National Wine Centre
- Organising the National Energy Roundtable of consumer advocates in Canberra
- February Fruit & Veg month challenge
- The SACOSS “Small Change” cycling team taking on the Tour Down Under Challenge Ride

## 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](http://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](http://sacoss.org.au/ebulletin) for all the details.

## SACOSS on Twitter and Facebook

It's not all duckface selfies here you know...follow us on Twitter [@SACOSS](https://twitter.com/SACOSS)

And get your mouse-clicking finger on Facebook and LIKE us at [facebook.com/SACOSS](https://facebook.com/SACOSS)

## SACOSS News Autumn edition

If you would like to contribute to the Autumn SACOSS News, please contact SACOSS Communications Officer Marnie Round at [marnie@sacoss.org.au](mailto:marnie@sacoss.org.au)

Deadline for advertising and submissions is Monday 24 March

## SACOSS Honorary Life Membership Awarded to Michael Dawson.



SACOSS Board may from time to time award an Honorary Life Membership to a member so as to recognise their exceptional contribution to SACOSS and an outstanding contribution to addressing poverty, equity and justice.

SACOSS would like to congratulate Michael Dawson who was awarded Honorary Life Membership at the SACOSS AGM in November 2013.

Michael has served as a SACOSS Board and Policy Council member for over 12 years and currently holds a position on the Board. He has been a long-time contributor to the law and justice policy and advocacy work of SACOSS, and has represented SACOSS on several external committees.

Currently CEO of Community Business Bureau (CBB), Michael has made a significant contribution to the fields of disability, victims' rights and wellbeing, law and justice, and strengthening the community sector to deliver effective services.

He has advocated for rehabilitation of offenders and restorative justice from a strong position of supporting community safety and victims' interests, bringing two often opposing viewpoints together.

Passionate about the not-for-profit sector, Michael has always held a strong interest in community services - sitting as a Director or Public Officer on several voluntary Boards of Governance of Incorporated Associations over many years. He is appointed by relevant Ministers to the SA Classification Council, Legal Services Commission of South Australia, and the Volunteer Ministerial Advisory Group.

## SACOSS Room Hire

**Do you need space for a conference, meeting, or smaller gathering?**

SACOSS has two rooms available for hire at the rear of the offices of Marjorie Black House, 47 King William Rd, Unley.

The Marjorie Black Community Room can seat approximately 60. Facilities include: laptop, data projector, electronic whiteboard, hearing loop and kitchenette. The Daphne Gum quiet room comfortably seats up to 10.

For more information and booking details visit [sacoss.org.au/room-hire](http://sacoss.org.au/room-hire) or contact Vivian Clark at [vivian@sacoss.org.au](mailto:vivian@sacoss.org.au)

## The SACOSS 2014 Conference: Taxing Times – Sustaining Vital Services

will raise a range of issues which are critical to our sector and to vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our state. These include the need for a sustainable tax base to fund vital services and income supports, gaps in key social justice areas like housing, health, justice and social participation, as well as sector-specific concerns around contracting and the burden of red tape.

The Conference will also feature the Formal Launch of the 2014 SACOSS State Election Platform

**Tuesday 11 February 2014**

**National Wine Centre, Adelaide**

# SACOSS 2014 CONFERENCE TAXING TIMES SUSTAINING VITAL SERVICES

**11 FEBRUARY 2014**

**REGISTER NOW!**

<https://sacoss2014.eventbrite.com.au>

### Sessions and topics to be covered include:

- > Financing Community Services  
- taxes and social investment bonds
- > Better contracting arrangements  
- lessons from business
- > Red tape reduction  
- what's stopping us?
- > The costs of cutting services  
- legal, education, employment services
- > Cost of Living - what's going on  
and what can we do about it?



**Speaker Profile:**  
**Dr Richard Denniss**  
**Executive Director,**  
**The Australia Institute**

The Australia Institute is a public policy think tank based in Canberra. An economist by training, Richard has worked for the past 20 years in a variety of policy and political roles. He has been appointed to a number of government advisory bodies, including the current review of Australia's retirement income system. He is known for his ability to translate economic issues into everyday language. Richard has published extensively in academic journals, has a fortnightly column in *The Canberra Times* and *Australian Financial Review* and was the co-author of the best-selling *Affluenza* (with Dr Clive Hamilton) and *An Introduction to Australian Public Policy: Theory and Practice* (with Dr Sarah Maddison).

Primary Schools

Health Promotion

Roads

Hospitals

Counselling

Emergency Relief

Arts

Buses

Aboriginal Services

Police

Health Care

Courts

Tourism Promotion

**Without taxes,  
vital services disappear**

Concessions

TAFE

Consumer Protection

Trains

Fire Fighters

Mental Health

Legal Aid

Foster Care

Industry Assistance

Family Support

Prisons

Public Housing

Secondary Schools

Community Centres

Financial Assistance

Nursing

Victim Support

Disability Support

National Parks

Universities

Public Events



@sacoss #satax



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