

Priority Issue: A Sustainable and Thriving Community Sector

ACT Context

The ACT community sector is acknowledged as a significant component of the ACT economy, a significant employer of women and an efficient sector that works in partnership with Government to support the ACT's most vulnerable citizens.

The sector is going through a significant period of change, driven by both local and national reform projects. Federally, changes include the introduction of the Australian Charities National Commission as the new regulator of not-for-profit organisations, proposed taxation changes, new standards being introduced in a number of sub sectors and developments in industrial relations as a result of the Equal Wage Case and new national work health safety legislation. Locally, new systems such as a prequalification process for community sector organisations, have already been introduced and the Government and community sector are working on a broader project of sector reform.

YWCA of Canberra and WEL ACT Perspective

The community sector is a thriving sector, known for its creativity and innovation. Change is nothing new for the sector – if we reflect on history, huge changes have been introduced in the last twenty years which have seen the sector move from largely volunteer based to a professionalised sector. This current wave of change is part of this process.

As a large employer of women, we support the sector's move to a more professionalised basis, where the work is appropriately valued and remunerated. As such we have always been strong supporters of the Equal Wage Case and were delighted when this case was finalised (while disappointed by the implementation timeframe).

The sector is able to embrace change when it is clear, justified and achievable. Working in partnership with Governments the sector is well placed to thrive in a changing environment. This transition will be most successful where an environment of partnership and collaboration is created.

Key Recommendations for Political Parties

The YWCA of Canberra and WEL ACT call on political parties to:

1. Commit to fully funding the implementation of the Equal Wage Case for the community sector, in a way that does not disadvantage organisations that have already planned for changes in wages.
2. Remove the current co-contribution for the community sector reform process, and instead fund these initiatives from alternative funding sources (that will not have an impact on community sector funding).
3. Commit to on-going recognition of the increasing costs of delivering services by providing appropriate indexation on an annual basis to organisations providing services on behalf of the ACT Government.

