

The Social Compact

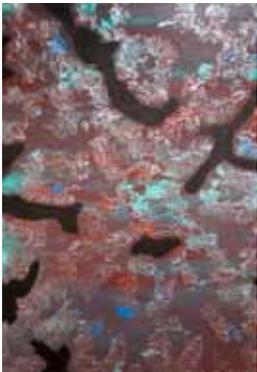
A RELATIONSHIP FRAMEWORK
BETWEEN THE ACT GOVERNMENT
AND COMMUNITY SECTOR



ACT
Government

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Novie Creech's artwork *Lisa* (left) provided the inspiration for the design of *The Social Compact*. The artwork was entered in the 2011 Tenants' Union ACT International Tenants' Day Art Competition.

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Foreword

The ACT Government continues its vision to build Canberra as a place where all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of an inclusive community.

In achieving this vision, the ACT Government recognises both the crucial role of the community and the effectiveness of a strong, robust working relationship between government and community organisations to build an inclusive, equitable and sustainable community. *The Social Compact* highlights the vital role played by the community sector and its long standing and significant contribution to community life.

As a Government we are working to ensure greater openness in government and engagement and collaboration across sectors to maximise positive outcomes.

This means:

- citizen participation to improve the wellbeing of our community
- transparency in process and access to information
- community, business and government working together to deliver integrated responses that benefit all Canberrans.

The Social Compact complements *The Canberra Plan – Towards our Second Century*, the *Canberra Social Plan 2011* and *Engaging Canberrans: A Guide to Community Engagement* to provide a comprehensive framework to improve outcomes for our community.

The new *ACT Public Service Values and Signature Behaviours* of Respect, Integrity, Collaboration and Innovation articulate the values that bind us together in serving the community and recognise that when we bring our diverse experience together and work with a shared purpose, that we achieve our best results.

The Social Compact promotes our sectors' collective commitment to a strong and effective relationship that benefits all Canberrans and communities in the ACT. Based on a set of key principles and undertakings, the Compact outlines the way we work together and what we can expect as we progress our joint work.

I commend *The Social Compact* to ensure the relationship between community organisations and the ACT Government remains strong, responsive and effective.

Katy Gallagher MLA
Chief Minister

The Health Care Consumers' Association supports *The Social Compact* as an important tool to help the community and government work together. It outlines our joint commitment to work in a respectful and constructive manner, to share information and make decisions that will benefit the Canberra community. We look forward to it opening up more opportunities for citizens to be involved in decisions about services we use.

Dr Adele Stevens President, Health Care Consumers' Association

Volunteering ACT strongly supports *The Social Compact* as a practical way to encourage positive relationships based on mutual respect between the ACT Government and the community sector.

Maureen Cane CEO, Volunteering ACT

The Social Compact highlights the fact that both government and the community sectors make significant contributions to the community. Recognising and respecting these roles is important in order to best meet the needs of our community. *The Social Compact* acts as a cornerstone in providing the framework which enables all of us to better serve Canberra.

Paul Flint Executive Director, COTA ACT

The ACT Council of Social Service promotes and recognises *The Social Compact* as a dynamic tool, articulating the important relationship of government and community. As an evolutionary relationship, capturing current concepts underpinning the relationship assists us in the development of our shared community vision.

Roslyn Dundas Director, ACT Council of Social Service

The Social Compact clearly promotes the critical relationship between ACT Government and the community sector. It articulates respect for the diverse roles we all play, our ability to come together constructively and work in the interests of the ACT Community, and the importance of transparent relationships between government and community organisations. The Youth Coalition recognises the importance of this document in assisting organisations to work collaboratively at all levels.

Emma Robertson Director, Youth Coalition of the ACT

Introduction

***The Social Compact* is a statement of understanding about the relationship between the ACT Government and the community sector. It outlines principles of good communication and partnership for the benefit of all people and communities in the ACT.**

The Social Compact is a living document, maintaining relevance as relationships develop and evolve, and able to adapt to changing environments. It describes both the network of relationships across the ACT Government and the local community, as represented by special interest groups and communities, and the direct relationship between the Government and the ACT community sector.

The Social Compact is intended to promote mutual understanding and guide community sector and Government representatives to adopt processes and behaviours that value the role, contribution and expertise of both the Government and community sector.

The relationship between the two sectors is significant because they share many goals and values and are interdependent in many roles and functions. The community sector and Government cannot achieve their individual goals without constructive relations built on mutual understanding, respect and cooperation. Despite their distinct roles and accountabilities, there is a strong interface between the community sector and Government.

Shared vision

The foundation of *The Social Compact* is a collective commitment to a robust and effective relationship. The shared vision is of a Canberra as a place where all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of an inclusive and vibrant community.

The ACT community sector and Government share a commitment to improve life for all Canberrans through participation in cultural, social, humanitarian, environmental and economic activities. To achieve this, the two sectors need to plan, learn and work together, building on existing strengths, encouraging innovation and making sound decisions informed by evidence.

Role and contribution of community sector

The community sector includes a wide range of not-for-profit community organisations, self help groups, community associations and consumer advocacy groups. Their collective activity is directed to building community involvement and participation, addressing social needs and strengthening community capacity.

Community organisations and groups that make up the sector are extraordinarily diverse in philosophy, functions, interests and organisational form. This diversity with its many voices and perspectives is invaluable to our democratic processes.

The community sector has many functions. For example, groups might represent the interests of organisations and/or individuals, they might have an ongoing presence and relationship with the ACT Government or they might emerge in response to a specific issue. They might be incorporated, independently governed and receive funding from government or consist of loosely associated groups of community volunteers. Peak bodies and representative groups play a vital and unique role in advocating issues. At times community organisations may pursue their objectives without reference to government agencies.

Community organisations and groups that make up the sector range from large organisations managing million dollar budgets to local groups who come together voluntarily around a shared concern or common interest.

At a broader level, the community sector contributes to the planning, and both participates in and initiates the development, of government policy. The sector supports and empowers communities and individuals to have a voice and influence in service design and delivery, and in broader policy and planning decisions.

Role and contribution of government

The ACT Government includes a legislative arm elected by the community to govern, a judicial arm and an administrative arm (the public service) organised into directorates responsible for advising and conducting Government business. The relationship with the community sector occurs across these arenas.

The ACT Government has responsibility for legislation, social and economic planning, public policy and programs, collecting and allocating revenue, regulation, safety and protection of community members. Government agencies invest and deliver services for the community such as: education and employment opportunities; secure, sustainable housing and infrastructure; and good health and wellbeing across the life course. These diverse services are provided to people across their life span and include: community development; early intervention services; advice and information; crisis support; and ongoing services.

The ACT Government is committed to engaging effectively with its citizens in an accountable, responsive and equitable way. It has a responsibility for promoting participation and diversity, building community capacity and addressing social needs. It has a particular responsibility to pursue equity in the way public resources are distributed, balancing individual and community needs.

Principles for working together

These principles provide the foundation for the partnership and constructive working relations between the community sector and Government.

RESPECT

Mutual respect for the roles, and recognition of the capacity and capabilities, of each sector.

OPEN COMMUNICATION

Open and transparent communication and processes, and confidence and trust in each other.

ENGAGEMENT

Community participation in planning, policy development and other decision making that is inclusive of our diverse community.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Innovation and continuous improvement in the planning, delivery of services and workforce development.

LEADERSHIP

Integrity, ethical practice, accountability and leadership in the way each partner operates.

DIVERSITY

Flexibility and cultural sensitivity when consulting and responding to different groups in the community.

Undertakings

These undertakings are guiding standards aligned to the principles, to assist the community sector and Government in their work together.

THE COMMUNITY SECTOR WILL UNDERTAKE TO

- Understand and acknowledge the complexity, constraints and limitations faced by Government in balancing different community interests.

- Build confidence and trust in Government partners/agencies.
- Maintain transparency in communication and information sharing with Government.

- Actively involve community members in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of policy, services and community development activities.

THE GOVERNMENT WILL UNDERTAKE TO

- Respect the right of community organisations to comment on and challenge the Government's policies and programs by working through political channels, as well as with staff of Government agencies.
- Recognise the importance of and support the sustainability and long-term resource capacity of the community sector.

- Build confidence and trust in community partners/organisations.
- Maintain transparency in communication, information sharing and in decision making processes wherever possible.

- Actively involve community members in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of policy, services and community development activities.

THE COMMUNITY SECTOR WILL UNDERTAKE TO

- Undertake and participate in research and data sharing that informs policy and service design to enhance community outcomes.
- Participate in sector development and training opportunities to keep abreast of new developments.
- Commit to work towards continuous quality improvement.
- Engage with reform activities such as 'reducing red tape'.

- Take responsibility in the relationship and be accountable for the process and outcomes.
- Encourage and expand opportunities for joint work on policy review and development and planning.
- Ensure processes are followed and mechanisms are enacted.

- Work in flexible ways to ensure people who are more vulnerable and experiencing exclusion are heard in policy and planning processes.
- Use culturally appropriate processes to consult with and involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

THE GOVERNMENT WILL UNDERTAKE TO

- Support and use available research and data to identify and promote good policy and service delivery.
- Invest in training and development in the public and community sectors.
- Recognise the skills and the experience of the community sector as a resource to help guide continuous improvement across both sectors in service provision.
- Commit to work towards continuous quality improvement.
- Identify a community sector reform agenda that will deliver the best possible outcomes for the Canberra community such as 'reducing red tape'.

- Take responsibility in the relationship and be accountable for processes and outcomes.
- Encourage and expand opportunities for joint work on policy review, development and planning.
- Work towards better integration of policies and programs within and across government agencies directed to specific population groups or needs in the community.

- Consider the specific parts of the community sector that represent the most vulnerable and marginalised people.
- Provide pathways for people who are more vulnerable and experiencing exclusion to have direct and strong voice in policy and decision making.
- Understand and support culturally appropriate processes to consult with and involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Implementing The Social Compact

The Joint Community Reference Group (JCGRG) is a consultative mechanism that provides strategic advice on critical issues that affect ACT Government and non-government agencies in the human services sector.

The JCGRG's role lies in striving to enhance the relationship between the government and non-government sectors. It also has an ongoing responsibility to review the Compact to ensure it remains relevant and practical.

The Social Compact aims to create practical improvements in the relationship between the Government and community sector. The JCGRG will actively work to resolve barriers to implementation and identify opportunities associated with *The Social Compact*. The JCGRG provides the central forum to bring forward issues and discuss options to improve processes at a systemic level.

The Social Compact is intended to promote mutual understanding and guide community sector and Government representatives to adopt processes and behaviours that value the role, contribution, perspectives and expertise of both sectors.

The Social Compact will be used in four main ways:

- to build and sustain strong working relationships
- improve engagement in planning and policy and service design
- continue to improve service quality, innovation and sustainability
- as a basis for reviewing and improving how the relationship is working.

The JCGRG will oversee progress of *The Social Compact* and will inform and build awareness of the Compact within the community sector and Government. To support the implementation of the Compact JCGRG will:

- undertake communication, providing examples where the relationship is working well and the spirit of the Compact is evident
- carry out an annual review, focusing on the undertakings and awareness of the Compact.

Acknowledgements

Many people from the ACT Government and community organisations and groups contributed to the development of *The Social Compact*. The strength of the document is a tribute to their ideas and contributions.

Joint Community Government Reference Group (as at May 2012)

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Ian Rentsch Mental Health Community Coalition ACT

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Joint Community Government Reference Group (as at May 2012)

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