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CHANGE



NTCOSS
Northern Territory
Council of Social Service

OUR SECTOR & STAFF
are **CHAMPIONS**
AND A CONDUIT FOR
CHANGE



Annual Report

2022–23



NTCOSS respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout the Northern Territory and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Aboriginal sovereignty has not been ceded.

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NTCOSS Connection

President's Report



Dear Members and Stakeholders,

Reflecting on the past year, we remain dedicated to our vision of creating a fair, inclusive, and sustainable Northern Territory. We firmly believe that, by working together, we can bring about positive change and enhance the lives of Territorians.

We are delighted to announce the finalisation of our 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, which revolves around three key roles that define our purpose and commitment to the community: policy and advocacy, member support, and sector stewardship. Our strength lies in the diverse network of ACCOs and NGOs we serve. This new strategic plan embodies our values of collaboration, integrity, and independence.

It is vital to acknowledge the profound impact of cumulative cuts through efficiency dividends, inadequate indexation, and rising costs, which have placed immense pressure on our member agencies. We continue to steadfastly advocate for a sustainable and healthy sector, recognising that this will ultimately benefit the communities we serve.

This year, we bid farewell to Deborah De Natale, who, in her four years with us, achieved remarkable progress for our sector. She strengthened relationships with ACCOs, was a passionate advocate for the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, and proactively championed the sector's views through significant government reform. Deborah's support during the pandemic showcased the sector's value as an essential frontline service responder.

In May, we welcomed Dr. Stephanie Kelly back to the Territory to assume leadership of NTCOSS.



Key Achievements

Member Engagement

We actively engaged with our member organisations to better understand their needs and concerns. Listening to our member voices has helped us develop a strategic plan to guide NTCOSS in the coming years.

Advocacy

NTCOSS has demonstrated through our advocacy that we can successfully influence policy, including campaigns such as raising the age of criminal responsibility. We continue to advocate for policy improvements in domestic and family violence, young people, child safety, and Aboriginal justice.

Collaboration

We strengthened our partnerships with members, government, other peak organisations, and stakeholders. These collaborations have allowed us to work more efficiently toward our shared goals.

NTCOSS Conference

We delivered our first post-COVID conference in May of this year, bringing the sector together to collaborate, share knowledge, and stay informed.

Looking Forward

We are optimistic about the opportunities that lie ahead. We will continue to work closely with our members, government, and partners. As we move into a Territory election year, we will maintain our advocacy efforts and seek to influence change. In the coming year, we plan to continue providing high levels of advocacy and support for our member organisations, amplifying their voices and recognising their deep connections to our grassroots communities. We will persist in our efforts to influence policy changes that benefit our community and promote social justice.

I want to express my gratitude and appreciation to our dedicated staff, member organisations, and partners, including our key funder, the NT Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet, who have made our achievements possible. I also thank the board, many of whom are new, for your valuable insights and contributions to the governance of NTCOSS.

I look forward to another year of collective action and progress. Together, we will continue to make a positive impact in our community.

Yours Sincerely

Jayne Lloyd
President

CONNECTION

CEO's Report

The Year in Review

As CEO of the Northern Territory Council of Social Service I am pleased to present our Annual Report. The report is a good chance to reflect on the last year, showcase the collaborative approach and social impact of our work and celebrate the impressive outputs and achievements of our small team.

NTCOSS has been the peak body for the Social and Community sector for 47 years in a role that has changed and evolved, including in the last 12 months with a change of CEO.

We officially released our new [Strategic Plan](#) during the year, which I encourage you to look at. It helps guide how we deliver as a peak body by combining our three key roles: policy and advocacy; member support and sector stewardship.

We continue to advocate for better outcomes across our key focus areas:

- Domestic, family and sexual violence
- Children and young people
- The Aboriginal Justice Agreement
- Youth Voice
- Social security, cost of living, housing and energy efficiency
- Funding indexation and sustainability

Some of the most significant legislative changes ever passed in the NT occurred last year and might not have occurred without years of work by NTCOSS.

NTCOSS played a crucial role in:

- the passing of the Anti-Discrimination Act (ADA), which provided significantly improved protections from discrimination for many Territorians
- the NT Government passing legislation to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12, the first Australian jurisdiction to do so.
- Mandatory sentencing reform, which NTCOSS advocated because the evidence shows that

jailing people does not work as a deterrent or to make victims of crime safer, but further criminalises rather than rehabilitates people.

NTCOSS's recent successes would not have occurred without the brilliant work of the recently departed CEO Deborah Di Natale.

We worked in partnership with the specialist DFSV sector to advocate for adequate funding, influence policy development and public discourse. We had a key role in the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) on DFSV, which was a successful example of the NT Government through Minister Kate Worden's office and the sector working together. The NT was allocated \$15.51 million over two years during the 2022-23 financial year.

NTCOSS was privileged to continue working with the NT Attorney-General Department and Aboriginal Justice Unit, the Paul Ramsay Foundation and community sector representatives to implement the transformative Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA). The AJA aims to reduce offending and imprisonment rates for Aboriginal Territorians in partnership with Aboriginal leadership. Significant achievements were made during the reporting period as detailed in this report.

We released several rounds of our Cost of Living reports, which the team has produced for many years and are read by key decision makers. The reports showed that as inflation soared there was increased hardship being endured by Territorians struggling to put a roof over their heads or keep the power on.

We elevated the voices of young people to have a say in their futures and policies that affect them through Youth Voice NT, for which we thank Territory Families, Housing and Communities for generously funding the project and an NTCOSS staff member.

A key highlight was holding the NTCOSS Conference in Mpartwe Alice Springs for the first time since 2019 due to the COVID pandemic.

To have so many leaders and innovators, strategic thinkers, practitioners, policymakers and researchers from around Australia in one place was a privilege; ACOSS CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie, SNAICC – National Voice for our Children CEO Catherine Liddle and Australia’s longest serving Minister of Indigenous Affairs, former federal politician Robert Tickner to name a few. Thank you to our members and stakeholders for coming to the conference and sharing insights and thought-provoking discussions.

NTCOSS organised numerous events and briefings for members. A highlight was the NT Budget Information session for members, presented by officers from NT Department of Treasury and Finance, providing information about the NT Budget development process. We continue to produce the NTcommunity online directory.

NTCOSS cannot achieve what it does without its members, volunteer board and our staff. Supporting our sector to thrive and be sustainable is at our core. The NT not-for-profit sector is larger and employs more people than the mining sector in the NT – with more than 20,000 Territory workers and volunteers – and contributes more to state domestic product.

Your collective commitment as a sector to provide critical frontline services to the community and your refusal to accept poverty, inequity or injustice in the Territory enables us to produce in-depth policy submissions and makes it a privilege to be part of this organisation.

A current key focus of NTCOSS’s work is restoring funding for the social services sector. There has been an effective cut to services due to non-indexation

in NT Government funding for our sector during a period of sharply rising inflation and mandated wage increases and a cost of living crisis. Our funding has been cut at a time that it is costing more to deliver community services and of significantly growing deprivation among clients and increased demand for our services.

Securing a commitment to address funding shortfalls and implementing a grant indexation model that is fair, principles-based, and sustainable, to provide certainty for the sector is a priority for us.

We value being part of a broader network across the country with ACOSS and the COSS network in every jurisdiction.

We look forward to many more years working with all our members, supporters and the community.

Dr Stephanie Kelly
CEO



About Us

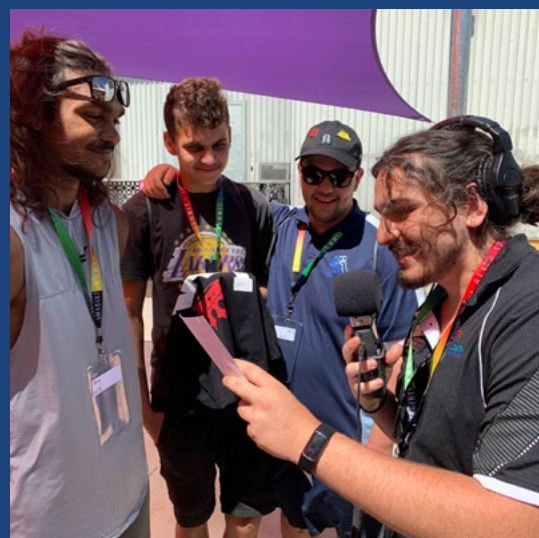
NTCOSS is the **peak body** for the Social and Community Sector in the NT and an advocate for social justice on behalf of people and communities who may be affected by poverty and disadvantage.

The NTCOSS team is located in both Darwin and Alice Springs, and for over 40 years has worked with its membership base, governments and other stakeholders to strive for better outcomes for Territorians.

The community sector plays a vital role in creating social wellbeing for all Territorians and in building safe and healthy communities. The sector provides services that enable people to access and participate in society, including health,

education, employment, economic development and family and community life.

NTCOSS represents a varied service sector, with members contributing different experiences and perspectives. The sector in the NT is made up of community managed, non-government, not for profit organisations that work in social and community service delivery, sector development and advocacy.





Vision

A fair, inclusive and sustainable Northern Territory.

Values

Our work is guided by three core values:

Collaboration – We build coalitions for change with our stakeholders and the community.

Integrity – We work with honesty and courage, and base our work on evidence.

Independence – Our actions are guided by the best interests of Territorians.



We Believe In

Empowering families and communities to make or influence decisions that affect them.

Harnessing the full potential of the social services sector as an agent for positive change and economic growth.

Focusing on long term outcomes through prevention and early support and building community strengths.

Supporting the self-determination of First Nations people and the development of the ACCO sector



NTCOSS 2022–27 Strategic Plan



Our new five-year Strategic Plan began in the second half of 2022. Developed in consultation with the Board, NTCOSS staff, and our members, the plan aims to harness the power of a strong, connected and engaged social service sector to continue the journey towards our vision of a fair, inclusive and sustainable Northern Territory.

NTCOSS extends a huge thank you to Nous Group for their facilitation, design, pro bono work and support of this project. We are grateful for the extensive input of our Board, NTCOSS members and key NT Government stakeholders who were engaged and consulted through surveys and forums.

To access the full strategic plan, visit the [NTCOSS website](#).

NTCOSS Strategic Plan 2022-2027

Our vision

A fair, inclusive and sustainable Northern Territory.

We believe in...

NTCOSS has identified the following aspirational long-term goals that shape our work. Tangible outcomes will be developed for each of these to assist us to measure our impact:

Strong families and communities

that make or influence the decisions that affect them

Self-determination of First Nations people

and development of the ACCO sector

Financial security and economic sustainability

for all Territorians

Justice and equity

guide all facets of policy design

Investment in prevention and early support,

and in building community strengths

An impactful social services sector

that delivers quality community services and is an agent for positive change and economic growth

Our values (how we work)

Our work is guided by three core values:

COLLABORATION

We build coalitions for change with our stakeholders and the community



INTEGRITY

We work with honesty and courage, and base our work on evidence



INDEPENDENCE

Our actions are guided by the best interests of Territorians



Our enablers

Culture and staff capability development

- We will invest in the development of our people
- We will maintain a strong positive culture

Financial sustainability

- We will diversify our revenue sources

Data collection and evidence base

- We will develop and maintain effective data collection systems
- We will leverage this data to create a strong evidence base supporting our work

Simple but robust processes

- We will identify, document and update key processes
- We will keep them simple, in line with the size of our organisation

Our roles and strategic priorities

As a peak body, we deliver by combining three key roles:

Policy and advocacy:

we work collaboratively with our members, governments and other stakeholders to contribute to the development of quality social policy, and advocate for the needs of people experiencing vulnerability and the members who support them

Member support:

we assist our members through a range of services aligned with their needs, from capability building to networking and online resources

Sector stewardship:

we play a role insteering sector-wide reform and cooperation to set and execute a shared agenda



Policy and Advocacy

NTCOSS advocates for better outcomes across our policy key focus areas:

- Domestic, family and sexual violence
- Children and young people
- Aboriginal justice
- Social security, cost of living, housing and energy efficiency

NTCOSS continued to demonstrate through its policy and advocacy work in the last year that it can significantly influence policy. Some of the most significant legislative changes ever passed in the NT occurred last year and might not have occurred without the tireless work of NTCOSS and its members.

November 2022 was a particularly big month with:

1. **Mandatory sentencing reform**
2. **Anti-Discrimination Act (ADA) reform**
3. **Raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12**

We produced 18 submissions, including 10 national submissions and six Cost of Living fact sheets.

This work cannot be done without working collaboratively with our members, governments, and other stakeholders to develop and advocate on quality social policy and strengthen the sector through targeted consultations, network meetings and stakeholder engagement.

We value the input and generosity of our members in providing their time and energy to these processes. NTCOSS strives for change that supports and promotes fair, just, and inclusive communities for all Territorians.

Close, strategic partnerships with other NT peak bodies and key advocates enables NTCOSS and our stakeholders to support each other's work and area of expertise and allows us all to maximise our resources. The experience and expertise of our members brings strength and rigour to our policy and advocacy work.

Our work is guided by principles and frameworks including the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework 2018–2028; the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Inter-Agency Coordination and Reform Office's (DFS-VICRO) policy work; the National Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women; the 10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory; National Agreement on Closing the Gap; the NT Aboriginal Justice Agreement; recommendations in the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT (2017); and recommendations in the Productivity Commission study report on Expenditure on Children in the NT (2020).

Locking up children makes us less safe



DEBORAH DI NATALE

THE Northern Territory Council of Social Service was pleased when the government recently introduced new laws to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12. This makes us the first jurisdiction in the country to start listening to the evidence of what works for young people and to make our communities safer. The initial positive energy has partly given way to opposing voices. Crime is sensitive and politically-charged. It is well known that the media's over-reporting of violent incidents and young people (under 18) as perpetrators leads us to over-estimate how unsafe we are. We all want to be and feel safe in our community. To be a victim of a crime is traumatic. However, locking up children makes us less safe. I would like to counter the myths being peddled.

detention at a cost to the taxpayer of \$3300-plus a day. That is three 10- or 11-year-old children a year. A pretty small cohort. Children aged 10 or 11 don't commit serious, violent offences. No child under the age of 14 has ever been charged with murder in the Territory. **MYTH 2:** No diversion programs or other therapeutic alternatives for young people exist. **FACT 2:** There are numerous operational programs and family support services in the Northern Territory. The Back on Track program is one of the best-known service responses. **MYTH 3:** Police have been disempowered so do not call them any more to engage with 10 or 11-year-olds. **FACT 3:** Police powers to prevent and investigate crime and protect the community are generally the same whether dealing with children or adults and this will not change. Police have special powers under Care and Protection of Children Act to move on or even restrain and remove children and place them in alternative care.

behaviour – especially a 10- or 11-year-old – to prevent them becoming a serious offender. Programs include youth justice conferences involving the young person, their family and anyone affected by their behaviour such as a victim; programs to address behaviour and reduce reoffending, drug or alcohol abuse and working to pay back money to anyone affected. More than 60 per cent who complete a diversion program do not reoffend in the next 12 months. **MYTH 5:** A sentence in a detention centre such as Don Dale is an opportunity to turn your life around. **FACT 5:** The evidence suggests the opposite: 77 per cent of young people released from detention return within 12 months. Acting NT Children's Commissioner Nicole Hucks this year warned about soaring rates of self-harm and suicide attempts in Don Dale and of a "cage-like setting with minimal trauma informed responses". We strongly support Attorney-General Charney Paech's words when the legislation was introduced

We produced 18 submissions, including 10 national submissions and six Cost of Living fact sheets.



Domestic Family and Sexual Violence

NTCOSS continued to work with the specialist DFSV sector throughout the last financial year. This work included providing policy and advocacy support; increasing the services' capacity to meaningfully engage with government reforms; advocating for adequate and needs-based funding and influencing policy development and public discourse.

We had a key role in the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) on DFSV, in which Minister Kate Worden's office and the sector successfully collaborated. The NT was allocated \$15.51 million over two years from 2022-23, including the fast-tracking of \$10.7 million in August 2022 in recognition of the significant level of need in the Territory.

We coordinated responses to both the Territory and Federal governments on behalf of the DFSV sector. NTCOSS submissions included responses to the Review of the Legislation and Justice Responses to DV in the NT, the draft National Action Plan under the Nation Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children and the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children.

NTCOSS consulted with the community sector on the establishment of the DFSV Resource Centre. We convene quarterly DFSV network meetings in which DFSV services can raise systemic issues. We also convene quarterly meetings between the DFSV network and the Minister for DFSV Prevention and the Attorney-General. We represent the NT DFSV sector on NT and national forums such as the Cross Agency Working Group, the oversight mechanism for the NT DFSV Reduction Framework.

NTCOSS continues to coordinate the delivery of the Risk Assessment Management Framework training in partnership with Territory Families, Housing and Communities across the NT. NTCOSS held regular workshops around the NT throughout the year.

Children and Young People

This area is a key focus for NTCOSS. Key work included our ongoing involvement with the Children and Families Tripartite Forum and development of the 10 Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families. This was set up in response to the NT Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children's (2017) recommendations including for structured high level engagement between the NT Government, Commonwealth Government and the community sector.

The focus of the group is on children experiencing vulnerability, young people and families, and child protection and youth justice issues.

NTCOSS had a federal Department of Social Services position to sit on the Generational Strategy Implementation Group until February 2023. We also have two representatives on the Generational Strategy Steering Group.

The Generational Strategy was released in March 2023 and the Implementation Group worked throughout the year on developing the first Action Plan, which was recently released.

Aboriginal Justice

NTCOSS continued working with the NT Attorney-General Department and Aboriginal Justice Unit (AJU), the Paul Ramsay Foundation and community sector representatives to implement the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA).

The AJA was launched on 9 August 2021, with NTCOSS co-signing the Agreement as a foundation party. The Agreement received bipartisan support in March 2022, which is testament to its strength and will ensure its implementation beyond government cycles.

Significant achievements of the AJA across the last 12 months include advancements in the Community Court implementation, with the successful completion of drafting instructions for amendments to the Sentencing Act 1971 and Youth Justice Act 2005, leading to the assent of the Sentencing Legislation Amendment Act 2023 in May.

The expansion of Alternative to Custody (ATC) Facilities has seen significant developments, including a grant awarded to Drug and Alcohol Services Australia for service delivery at the Groote Eylandt ATC facility. Civil works for this new facility have been completed, with construction expected to conclude by October 2023, and additional ATC site selection activities underway.

Climate Justice

NTCOSS is committed to working with our members, government and the community to advocate for fast, fair and inclusive action on climate change and achieve net zero emissions.

Improved energy efficiency and solar power on all social housing would go a long way towards eliminating energy poverty in the NT – leading to better health, resilient and climate appropriate housing, and lower emissions.

NTCOSS worked with ACOSS to develop proposal for an energy relief package to put to the federal government and with The Energy Charter on its concessions awareness campaign.





Social Security, Cost of Living, Housing and Energy Efficiency

Helping Territorians experiencing disadvantage and hardship in terms of the cost of living and at the same time reducing inequality and exclusion is among our most important work. NTCOSS contributed to a number of enquiries and studies during the reporting period.

We produced Cost of Living reports in December, January and April amid federal and NT budgets and the highest inflation in decades. The reports focussed on the cost of utilities, transport, housing, and food and showed that as inflation soared there was increased hardship being endured by Territorians. We have produced these reports for many years, they are read by key decision makers and provide an evidence base and are cited in our work with government and in parliamentary inquiries.

NTCOSS continued to advocate for policies that improve housing access for the Territory's most disadvantaged residents. Our Cost of Living reports showed access to private rental properties was nearly impossible for people on Job Seeker or the minimum wage despite living in one of the wealthiest nations in the world. NTCOSS made submissions after the reporting period to the Senate Inquiry into the worsening rental crisis in Australia and to the National Housing and Homelessness Plan Issues Paper. NTCOSS advocated for reforms to the NT Residential Tenancies Act to ensure Territory renters have at least the same rights and protections as other jurisdictions, which led to partial success when legislation was introduced to strengthen NT tenancy laws after the reporting period. We also advocated for the need to expand the Rent Choice rental subsidy scheme to ensure affordable housing; to release more land for housing and provide incentives to ensure 20% of new supply is for social and affordable housing to address the shortfall of 12,000 homes.

NTCOSS Policy Manager Sarah Holder appeared at a Senate inquiry in May to advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and against the new compulsory income management card. Sarah told the parliamentary inquiry into Income Management it was disappointing the Federal Government had not ended compulsory quarantining of welfare payments. NTCOSS made submissions to the Inquiry to Social Security Amendment (Income Management Reform) Bill and Inquiry into Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Safety Net) Bill.

NTCOSS continued to advocate for policies and programs that reduce energy hardship in the NT, and to work with members and networks to end energy poverty. A large number of Territorians experience energy hardship, resulting in energy rationing, skimping on essentials and disconnections. NTCOSS member Tangentyere collected data showing that involuntary self disconnections occurred at an alarming rate during the reporting period. Nearly one disconnection a week was occurring for households with prepayment meters, often in remote communities, with electricity disconnected when customers are unable to top up their meter.

NTCOSS continued to convene the NT Utilities Network, bringing together people who work in community services who work to reduce and eliminate energy poverty in the NT.

NTCOSS was invited to sit on Power & Water Corporation's 24-29 Reset Advisory Committee, which was an opportunity to raise issues about energy hardship and its causes in the NT, and canvass solutions. NTCOSS continued to advocate for improved energy performance in the NT, including calling for the implementation of minimum energy efficiency standards in rental housing. We produced a submission to the Federal government's consultation to inform a National Energy Performance Strategy, following consultation with stakeholders from government and the community.

We advocated for the roll out of solar power to all social housing in the NT – which would reduce energy hardship for thousands of Territorians and reduce carbon emissions.

Connection

Campaigns

Anti-Discrimination Act Reform

In November 2022, the Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill passed. NTCOSS actively and strongly campaigned on this bill, contributing a submission to the NT Government, contributing to their press release on the bill and producing an OP-ED published in the Sunday Territorian newspaper.

These reforms were long overdue and significantly improved protections from discrimination for many Territorians including the LGBTQIA+ community, people with disability, carers and people experiencing homelessness, unemployment, domestic and family violence and racism.

Key wins include the full removal of 37A – an exemption for religious schools to discriminate based on sexuality, and the introduction of anti-vilification measures. LGBTQIA+ Territorians employed in religious schools can go to work knowing that they can no longer be discriminated against and will receive the same protections as staff at non-faith based schools and workers elsewhere.

Many people across the sector have been campaigning for these reforms since 1992 and it has been a significant collaborative effort involving many of our members and broader stakeholders.

This was a huge milestone and sign of how strong collaborative efforts can produce wins even in the face of a strong public scare campaign opposing the bill, largely due to misinformation regarding religious freedoms.

Raising the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility to 12

In November 2022, the NT Government passed legislation to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) from 10 to 12 years. NTCOSS welcomed the youth justice amendments passed in Parliament that will stop 10 and 11-year-old children from being locked up in detention centres.

The sector has long been advocating to raise the MACR to 14, in line with a huge body of evidence and best practice internationally regarding the need for the therapeutic approach to address children's behaviour and developmental needs.

However, this was still an important first step towards this goal. The Northern Territory set a precedent by being the first jurisdiction in Australia to do this and start listening to the evidence of what works for young people and to make our communities safer. We also welcome parliament abolishing mandatory sentencing laws, meaning people will no longer face automatic prison sentences for some domestic violence, drug and assault offences.

We support the Attorney- General Chansey Paech's words in parliament: "If we want safer communities, we must break the cycle of reoffending. This is what smarter justice looks like".





Smarter Justice

The launch of the Smarter Justice for Safer Communities campaign and report Smarter Justice: A better way of doing justice in the Northern Territory attracted widespread support and interest. Speakers at the launch were diverse, coming from the justice, community services and business sectors in line with our communications objective to 'broaden the tent'. A significant early win for the campaign on this front was the support of the NT Chamber of Commerce. The launch attracted widespread media interest across print, online, radio and television, and informed an editor's opinion in the NT News that backed diversion programs.

In the digital space, the Smarter Justice campaign's proactive social media efforts have attracted a significant following, making it a powerful tool for reshaping narratives around crime and justice, and engaging with a wide audience to foster informed discussions and meaningful change.

National Raise the Rate Campaign

NTCOSS continued to advocate alongside our COSS colleagues and supporters for the Federal Government to raise the base rate of Job Seeker and other working age income support payments to at least \$78 a day, to support people to afford the basic costs of living.

Legislation was recently introduced to raise payments by \$20 a week, but remains at between just \$43 and \$54 a day. The campaign brings together community organisations, unions, not-for-profits and grassroots campaigners.

Sector Funding concerns

From July 2022, NTCOSS has raised concerns on behalf of the sector relating to the Fair Work Australia National Wage Case decision that resulted in a minimum 5.1% increase in labour costs for community organisations.

In conjunction with the NTCOSS Board and other peak bodies, we engaged in advocacy with NT Government at multiple levels, including directly to the Chief Minister, Treasurer and through the NNPG.

NTCOSS made this a priority by collecting case studies from member organisations, requesting the cessation of an efficiency dividend in our pre-budget submission and through an OP-ED in the NT News.

This remains a focus of our advocacy and NTCOSS will continue to campaign on behalf of our members.

Allies for Uluru Coalition

NTCOSS joined the Allies for Uluru Coalition in February 2023. The Coalition represents more than 200 civil society organisations across Australia, that have come together to support the implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, starting with the establishment of a First Nations Voice to Parliament, enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

With support from the NTCOSS Board of Directors, NTCOSS released a [statement](#) supporting the Voice and has been actively promoting and supporting advocacy by the Allies for Uluru Coalition and the Yes23 campaign.

In April 2023, NTCOSS provided a submission to the Inquiry into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum, supporting a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament.

Our Collective Voice

As the peak body, NTCOSS continued to play a vital role as the leading voice on matters affecting the NT's community sector.

We coordinate community sector responses to emerging issues; respond to current and proposed government policies and practices; develop media opportunities and narratives to support our advocacy across our main policy areas and build media capacity in the sector to better capture and share our stories.

We are trusted by our members and the media, to speak up and speak out on the issues faced by communities experiencing extreme vulnerabilities and disadvantage in the Northern Territory.

Our expertise on policy areas such as domestic, family, and sexual violence; social security; Aboriginal justice; and children and young people is widely recognised.

The NTCOSS website will be improved and relaunched in 2023-24 to better serve our sector, members and their work.

It has been a busy year for media engagement – both proactive and reactive. Some highlights include:

NTCOSS featured prominently in coverage about the NT being the first jurisdiction in Australia to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12. We held a joint press conference with print, TV, online and radio media outside parliament with AMSANT, NAAJA and NT Legal Aid. We also published an OP-ED by Deborah Di Natale in the Sunday Territorian.

Deborah Di Natale conducted a press conference with AMSANT CEO John Paterson over the treatment of children and young people in detention following leaked letters from Children's Commissioner re: self harm and a visit to the Don Dale centre.

Our Cost of Living reports received widespread media coverage as always across various channels, amid federal and NT budgets and the highest inflation in decades. Former CEO Deborah Di Natale and Jonathan Pilbrow were interviewed live on ABC NT's morning radio.

We launched and hosted the Smarter Justice for Safer Communities campaign at the Darwin Botanic Gardens. The event included numerous speakers and was reported on by media from the NT News, Sky News, SBS, ABC and Nine TV. A powerful story about community-led youth justice initiatives delivering a 95 per cent decline in crime and offending in Groote Eylandt was nationally reported.

Our Love letters to Mparntwe/Alice Springs campaign on social media to highlight positive stories following national negative media coverage was warmly received. Hundreds of followers on Facebook and Instagram followed the pages with locals contributing.

Our first conference in four years achieved prominent coverage across social media and traditional media. Keynote speaker, SNAICC CEO, Catherine Liddle's speech was reported in the NT News and keynote speaker, Health Justice Australia CEO, Tessa Boyd-Caine was interviewed on ABC Alice Spring's drive program. The CAAMA Aboriginal media group covered the event.

10

Media releases

5

Opinion pieces

3

Press conferences

Numerous media interviews with print, TV, online and radio.



Weekly e-bulletin sent to members



Regular member alerts

NTCOSS has an active presence and increasing engagement on social media.



Facebook has 1683 followers



Twitter (X) has 1727 followers



Linkedin has 808 followers



Instagram (Youth Voice NT) has 902 followers



Facebook (Youth Voice NT) has 319 followers.

NTCOSS

Sector Stewardship



NTCOSS Conference

We were delighted to host a two-day conference in May 2023 in Alice Springs, focused on the theme of Connection: The Force for Change.

There were powerful and emotional ideas and stories spoken about to drive social change and challenge the power structures that create disadvantage and inequality. Those structures prevent us from supporting resilient and thriving communities.

It had been a long wait. Our last conference was in 2019, with COVID-19 pandemic stopping it in 2021.

In addition to inspiring addresses from our key note speakers, the conference featured a range of panel discussions, covering worker wellbeing, the importance of storytelling to drive change and the need for strong allies and partnerships. [Click here](#) for more information on our speakers and program.

The conference was a great success, bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders who want to build a more just, equitable, and supported society for all.

Thanks to our valued members, sponsors and the diverse group of attendees from across the NT and the nation, including community leaders, policymakers and advocates for social change.

NTCOSS live tweeted words, video and images from the event.



The NT parliament will this week debate proposed changes to anti-discrimination civil laws that will say a lot about the type of place we want the Northern Territory to be, writes Deborah Di Natale. Picture: Bianca De Marchi

All Territorians need the same protections



DEBORAH DI NATALE

THIS week the NT's elected MLAs will debate proposed changes to anti-discrimination civil laws that will say a lot about the type of place we want the Northern Territory to be.

The NT is one of Australia's most culturally diverse jurisdictions: more than 100 Indigenous languages and dialects spoken here. The best societies in the world listen to the views, backgrounds and beliefs of all of their members and get better outcomes because of it. Last week there was a rallying cry of public rhetoric attacking the Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill 2022. It's a shame it would

and are the most significant since the Act was written 30 years ago. Something produced for the NT of 1992 undoubtedly needs modernising.

Consider how our world has changed: the technology and language we use and how we think about and treat each other in our lives at work and outside it.

The existing Anti-Discrimination Act was designed to protect you over attributes such as race, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religious and political beliefs and other aspects.

The updates modernise language and increase protection for people based on: language

including non-verbal, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual characteristics, career responsibilities, accommodation status and victims of domestic violence.

Why does this matter? Because we are not all treated equally and too many Territorians are discriminated

two in five school employees in Australia are employed in non-government schools. All employees deserve the same protections against discrimination as staff at non-faith based schools and workers elsewhere.

Removing this exemption will not remove religious freedom, or prevent hiring based on genuine occupational qualification. It will only remove the ability of a religious school to discriminate against a staff member or job applicant on the basis of the staff

The inclusion of attributes such as having been subjected to domestic, family and sexual violence, accommodation status and homelessness as well as the introduction of anti-victimisation measures and a representative complaints model, will provide important legal protections for all Territorians.

Changing the law does not eliminate discrimination and harm in the NT and we recommend a fully resourced public education campaign to inform people on their rights, duties and obligations.

However we get here, we live here because it is a special place that we like to think of as a land of the "fair go" where if you were hard you get opportunities you might not get elsewhere.

But that is not the reality for many Territorians who are discriminated against. We want a Territory

“Too many Territorians are discriminated against every day”

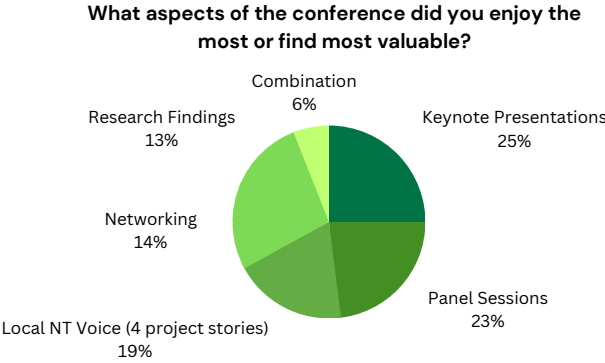


NTCOSS 2023 Conference Overview

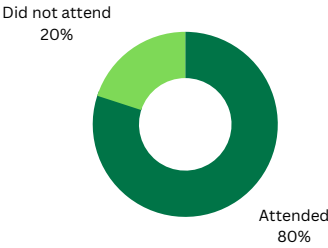
133 attendees



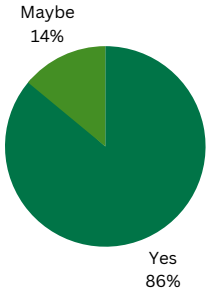
Non-government organisations represented over **90%** of attendance – **15%** of these being ACCO's.



Number of total attendees who attended Pre-conference Delegate Event (NTG)



Would you attend an NTCOSS Conference in future?



connection

Sector Stewardship

Other Key Sector Events:

NT Human Rights Awards – “The Fitzies”

Once again NTCOSS contributed to this annual event in a number of ways, including being part of the event steering committee. Known as the Fitzies (after the NT’s first Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Tony Fitzgerald), the Northern Territory Human Rights Awards celebrate notable activities in the NT – numerous NTCOSS members have been winners over the years.

NT Budget

NTCOSS organised an NT Budget Information session for members. Presented by officers from NT Department of Treasury and Finance, the session provided information about the NT Budget development process and how to read the NT Budget Papers.

After the NT Budget, NTCOSS worked with member organisations to provide a report to the community services sector outlining key measures in the budget and providing feedback from the sector to the NT Government.

Governance workshop scholarships

NTCOSS partnered with Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) to support senior management and Board members across the DFSV sector. Fifteen participants across the sector engaged in a virtual course facilitated by AICD – Governing to Protect Vulnerable People.

With such an overwhelming number of applications and positive feedback from those who attended, further scholarships were offered to the broader community service sector for governance workshops in late 2023.

AICD and NTCOSS strongly believe that offering scholarships for the NGO sector to attend these

workshops is an effective way to increase knowledge and education of Boards and Executive teams as an early intervention measure, meaning they have the tools and resources required to do their roles effectively.

Member and Sector Events

- In acknowledgement of International Day Against LGBTQIA+ Discrimination, NTCOSS partnered with NTAHC to offer Sexual and Gender Diversity training to member organisations in addition to the NTCOSS team.
- NTCOSS facilitated a Services Australia briefing on their work in Central Australia that was well attended and provided opportunity for organisations to ask questions, make connections and discuss potential partnership approaches.
- NTCOSS partnered with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to provide sector organisations with an opportunity to make sense of ABS statistics and raise questions and concerns with any information that is missing from a data perspective.
- NTCOSS hosted a presentation from the NT’s Office for Sustainable Energy, providing member organisations with information about the energy system in the NT and plans for the future.
- In response to demand for worker training to support compassion fatigue, NTCOSS partnered with ACD (Australian Childhood Foundation) to provide online training for the sector on the neurobiology of self care with a focus on vicarious trauma. Members were offered a heavily discounted price to engage.
- NTCOSS facilitated a number of briefings with NTCOSS members including: Care and Protection of Children Bill, secure care in Alice Springs, draft National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy, DFSV Resource Centre consultation paper, Submission to the Director of Gaming; Submission to the Inquiry on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum; submission to Commonwealth Department of the Treasury on Measuring What Matters statement.

- To enable a sector wide theory of change for both the DFSV sector and Youth Voice NT, NTCOSS engaged a consultant and facilitated several in person and virtual consultations for stakeholders to provide input and feedback to the process. A theory of change expresses the actions needed to bring about a change to address key problems and explains how the change will occur.

NTcommunity

The stand-alone online service directory, NTcommunity, was launched in 2021, meeting the needs of the NT Community Sector, the NT Government, and the NT community. The directory is available on the website and on mobile apps, to assist with offline access to service information.

A further five years of funding was granted by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities in 2022, to support NTCOSS to host and maintain the directory, with data correction and collection prioritised and further enhancements explored that meet community needs and standards.

In conjunction with our partners, Refuel Creative, the project has continued to develop over the last year, with the following improvements an example of implementing community and sector feedback:

- 24/7 National telephone/online crisis services added to NTcommunity directory,
- NT safe houses added to the directory,
- New NT services identified and approached to be added to directory to broaden the scope of NTcommunity.

NTcommunity is updated with new organisations and services as they become available and now provides access to more than 250 community organisations offering over 500 services across 380+ locations throughout the NT.

Youth Voice NT

Youth Voice NT works to raise the voices of young people aged 15 to 24 years who have not had the opportunity to engage in policies and strategies that directly affect them. Youth Voice improves the engagement young Territorians have with all levels of Government, to develop better solutions for improving the lives of young people in the NT. We appreciate and thank Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC) for its recognition of the need to raise the voices of young people in the Northern Territory (NT) and for generously funding Youth Voice NT for five years.

Through the project NTCOSS advocates for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse young people; young parents; those not engaged in education, training or employment; in out of home care; at risk of or involved in the youth justice system; at risk of or experiencing homelessness; with chronic health and mental health conditions; with alcohol and other drug issues; LGBTQIA+ people; from low socioeconomic backgrounds; with a disability; and who have experiences with DFSV.

We attended meetings with the youth sector network, youth sector stakeholders, the Youth Justice Advisory Committee meetings and with Government Departments and Minister's Offices during the 12-month reporting period.

We also facilitated a Youth Voice Steering committee meeting, bringing together youth sector representatives and young people who are helping to guide the Youth Voice NT project to ensure good outcomes for young people across the Territory. Youth Voice NT made submissions to the Northern Territory Draft Youth Strategy 2022 and Exposure Draft Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Our website provides information to the sector and young people. It's a place for youth sector workers and young people to find out about events, trainings, grants and read up on recent youth sector reports. www.youthvoicent.org.au.

Our Members

NTCOSS members reflect the diversity of the sector and include large charities, peak organisations, small community services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, community councils, advocacy groups and individuals interested in social policy.

Importantly, our members are committed to social justice issues for people and communities who face disadvantage in the NT.

NTCOSS assists our members through a range of services aligned with their needs, from capability building to networking and online resources. This support includes:

- Participation and collaboration on sector reform and development as well as legislative and social change campaigns
- Direct community sector information via NTCOSS' weekly e-bulletin and Member Alerts
- Linkages to the COSS National Network for resources, policy and reform information and research
- Ability to promote and advertise on the NTCOSS website for our jobs board, and events and training calendar
- Discounted attendance to NTCOSS Conferences, training, and sector events
- Members can use a hot desk in the Darwin or Alice Springs offices when travelling for work upon pre-arrangement
- Members can use the Darwin and Alice Springs training/ conference rooms with Microsoft Teams facilities
- Specific opportunities for contact/engagement including the opportunity for one-on-one meetings to discuss systemic issues impacting member organisations with the NTCOSS team.



Our Board

Name	Position	Appointed/Resigned
Jayne Lloyd	President/Public Officer	<i>Member for full year</i>
Patrick MacDonald	Vice President	<i>Member for full year</i>
Travis Borsi	Treasurer	<i>Appointed on November 2022</i>
Noelene Swanson	Treasurer	<i>Resigned from November 2022</i>
Craig Kelly	Committee Member	<i>Appointed from November 2022</i>
Andrew Keyton	Committee Member	<i>Resigned from July 2022</i>
Cheryl Schmidt	Committee Member	<i>Resigned from November 2022</i>
Carol Quill	Committee Member	<i>Resigned from November 2022</i>
Larissa Ellis	Committee Member	<i>Member for full year</i>
Chris Hammond	Committee Member	<i>Appointed on August 2023</i>
Rachael Bowker	Executive Committee Member	<i>Appointed on August 2023</i>
Anne Buxton	Secretary	<i>Resigned from November 2022</i>

Our Team

Staff

Deborah Di Natale,
Chief Executive Officer (up to March 2023)

Dr Stephanie Kelly,
Chief Executive Officer (from April 2023)

Sarah Holder,
Policy Manager

Michelle Barton,
Operations Manager

Tessa Snowden,
Senior Policy Officer (up to March 2023)

Caitlin Perry,
Senior Policy Officer

Mollie Harding,
Senior Policy Officer

Steph Burgess,
Youth Voice Project Officer

Sophie Hantz,
AJA Secretariat/Senior Policy Officer

Greg Roberts,
Media and Communications Officer

Ummay Hani Kalpona,
Administration and Membership Officer

Janine Sims,
NTcommunity Project Officer (from February 2023)

Contractors

Jonathan Pilbrow,
(Cost of Living Reports)

Refuel Creative

Dropln Solutions

Clubhouse Territory,
(bookkeeping support)

Alex Richmond, Open Circle Training,
(Risk Assessment Management Framework trainer)

Julianna Marshall
(Risk Assessment Management Framework trainer)

Rachel Neary,
(Risk Assessment Management Framework trainer)

Rebecca Forrest, No One Left Behind,
(NTCOSS Conference)

Dr Chay Brown, Boobook Consultancy,
(development of theory of change (DFSV and Youth Voice NT))

Hichem Demortier,
(operational planning)

Finance Reports

Statement of Financial Position

Northern Territory
Council of Social Service
Incorporated

Statement of financial
position

As at 30 June 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,768,790	1,928,191
Trade and other receivables	10,173	11,263
Other assets	14,442	14,619
Total current assets	1,793,405	1,954,073
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	450,405	505,374
Right-of-use assets	19,558	41,792
Total non-current assets	469,963	547,166
Total assets	2,263,368	2,501,239
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	135,072	83,524
Lease liabilities	18,558	31,112
Employee benefits	174,554	211,186
Other financial liabilities	19,178	18,131
Other liabilities	2,200	37,400
Total current liabilities	349,562	381,353
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Lease liabilities	-	11,002
Employee benefits	24,572	13,174
Total non-current liabilities	24,572	24,176
Total liabilities	374,134	405,529
Net assets	1,889,234	2,095,710
EQUITY		
Reserves	270,695	270,695
Retained earnings	1,618,539	1,825,015
Total equity	1,889,234	2,095,710

NTCOSS 2023 Audited
Financial Report with
accompanying notes is
available on our website
www.ntcoss.org.au.

Income and Expenditure

Northern Territory
Council of Social Service
Incorporated

Statement of profit or loss
and other comprehensive
income

For the year ended
30 June 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
REVENUE		
Revenue from grants	2,500,918	2,790,758
Other revenue	126,958	77,430
Finance income	4,305	1,345
	2,632,181	2,869,533
EXPENSES		
Employee benefits expense	1,156,961	1,099,377
Depreciation and amortisation expense	77,623	48,561
Contract Trainers/Consultants	1,128,370	283,990
Travel & Accommodation	109,666	99,893
IT support	83,328	51,627
Finance costs	1,743	2,794
Other expenses	280,966	342,820
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	(206,476)	940,471
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year	(206,476)	940,471

NTCOSS 2023 Audited
Financial Report with
accompanying notes is
available on our website
www.ntcoss.org.au

Our Partners

Thank you to the organisations and agencies who worked with us this year to help advance our vision of a fair, inclusive and sustainable Northern Territory.



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**



Australian Government
Department of Health



**NORTHERN
TERRITORY**
GOVERNMENT

RV/ :
NEVER BE AFRAID TO BE
LOUD & PROUD & NOISY

- CATHERINE LIDDLE

