



ACT community sector critical in preventing abuse of vulnerable people

ACTCOSS media release, Friday 8 May 2020

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) today welcomed legislation by the ACT Government to provide an avenue for vulnerable older people or people with a disability, and their advocates, to access ACT Human Rights Commission processes in seeking to address situations of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The change is part of legislation that introduces specific criminal offences for the abuse or exploitation of vulnerable members of the community, including older Australians. The offences can apply to both individuals and corporate entities.

CEO of ACTCOSS, Dr Emma Campbell, said: "This legislation highlights to the community that abuse of vulnerable people is unacceptable.

"However, many older Australians and people with disability may be unwilling to pursue criminal sanctions against perpetrators of abuse, particularly if the perpetrator is a family member.

"The opportunity for community members, or their advocates, who are experiencing abuse to use the ACT Human Rights Commission as a channel to resolve these issues is important."

Dr Campbell said: "Given that many older Canberrans and people with a disability face barriers in accessing appropriate support and representation, we urge the ACT Government to provide additional investment to ACT community sector organisations and community legal services that advocate on behalf of older Australians and people with disability.

"Individuals do not always recognise that they are experiencing abuse or exploitation at the hands of family members or close friends, and institutional settings sometimes do not classify abusive behaviour as criminal when it should be.

"ACTCOSS will also work closely with the ACT Government and community sector organisations to ensure that older Canberrans and people with a disability in the ACT can access relevant and accessible information, and that the community is aware of these new avenues for support," Dr Campbell said.

For more information, see the [media release](#) from Gordon Ramsay MLA.

ACTCOSS advocates for social justice in the ACT and represents not-for-profit community organisations.

**For more information or comment, please contact
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