

Pay rise set to bite community sector: Tucker

By STACEY LUCAS

Local community organisations have warned a recent increase in their staff award rates could slash jobs and services in the community sector.

Some organisations could be in a cash crisis, facing pay-outs of up to \$20,000, according to Greens MLA Kerrie Tucker.

The ACT Council of Social Service called on the Government yesterday to help fund the compulsory pay increase, which has been backdated to July.

In August the Australian Industrial Relations Commission handed down a decision granting all employees under the Social and Community Services Award in the ACT a \$44-\$48 pay increase.

ACTCOSS director Daniel Stubbs said organisations operated on extremely limited funding already, making it nearly impossible to cover the "well-deserved" pay rise.



Kerrie Tucker: cash crisis.

"The community sector has had to absorb too many increases in costs in recent years — this one will force cuts and closures of services."

Labor MLA Bill Wood and Ms Tucker have both called attention to the issue in the Assembly.

Ms Tucker said that if Government was willing to hand over responsibilities to the com-

munity sector, it had to ensure funding was set at a reasonable level.

"Failure to do so will result in increased pressure in the workplace and reduced services for people who need them."

Community Services Minister Michael Moore said the Government was looking at the matter with some care.

He pointed out funding was not entirely the ACT's responsibility as many organisations were partly funded by the Commonwealth.

But the Government was commissioning an investigation to determine the exact level of impact the increase would have on the ACT Budget.

With the Assembly in caretaker mode in the lead up to the October election, Mr Moore said a decision would be left to the next term.

"We're making sure the new government has the appropriate information available to them to make a decision," he said.