

19 June 2008

The Hon. James Wood, AO, QC
Commissioner
Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW
PO Box K1026
HAYMARKET NSW 1240

Dear Commissioner Wood

Community Services Grants Program

Following our joint submission to the Special Commission of Inquiry last month regarding the Community Services Grants Program (CSGP) we feel it is appropriate and necessary to advise you about further developments regarding the CSGP arising from the NSW State Budget 2008-09.

In our submission we indicated that the Department of Community Services (DoCS) had made a submission to NSW Treasury for additional funding to allow the review process to continue so that the Program would be able to deliver on the headline result that *“Disadvantaged children, young people and families and disadvantaged communities are resilient and safe”*. Unfortunately no additional funding was contained within the Budget.

It was also of great concern to us to learn that the Program had been moved within DoCS' Budget from “Community Development and Capacity Building” to “Statutory Child Protection”. Attached for your information is our joint communiqué on this decision.

We feel most strongly that this change fails to recognise the full range of CSGP service activities and undermines the real contribution of CSGP to child protection through prevention and early intervention as well as DoCS' commitment to supporting community capacity building in local communities.

The DoCS submission for the early intervention and prevention forum held by the Inquiry states:

“Three main areas of service activities for CSGP were identified by the Review:

1. Intensive Support Activities

...

2. Coordinated Support Activities

...

3. Skills Development and Resilience Building Activities”

This fails to acknowledge that DoCS, as part of the CSGP Roundtable, approved a fourth area of service activities for CSGP, “Service Development and Community Building

Activities". This is clearly evidenced in the "Service Activities" section of the attached diagram.

The omission of the fourth CSGP area of activity in the above list constitutes a failure to recognise the full range of CSGP services. This results in a skewed understanding of the Program's true value and inadequate representation of its existing contribution to DoCS core business.

We believe that ensuring children and young people's well being is best achieved by providing a continuum of services that support communities, families, young people and children. This must both include and give appropriate value to the existing contribution of the CSGP. This is supported by significant evidence before the Inquiry and highlighted in our recent submission. We view the decision to move the CSGP as a retrograde one that will push resources to the narrowly specialised end of child protection measures at the expense of preventative measures and earlier provision of support. It will, we believe, ultimately fail to improve the well being of children and young people.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alison Peters".

Alison Peters
Director
Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS)

On behalf of the CSGP Roundtable Peak organisations.