

NCOSS Analysis of the 2009-10 NSW State Budget

The 2009-10 NSW State Budget was handed down on 16 June 2009 by Treasurer Eric Roozendaal. The NCOSS Policy Team worked initially at NSW Parliament House as the Budget was delivered and attended departmental briefings and, having analysed the available budget information, have put together the following breakdown of the human services related spending.

■ Ageing, Disability and Home Care

The NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care DADHC has a budgeted allocation of \$2.3billion in 2009-10, an 11.8% increase over last year, comprising \$92.6m recurrent and \$145.4m capital. Over \$1.32billion of this will be provided to 900 community partners in grants and subsidies. Indexation for DADHC funded services is reported to be 2.5% in 2009-10.

Home & Community Care (HACC)

HACC growth funding in 2009-10, the second year of the HACC Triennial Plan, will be around 7.4% or \$54m, of which \$14m goes directly to NSW Health. The NSW allocation appears to match the Commonwealth growth allocation announced in the Federal Budget. The HACC allocation to DADHC is \$40.7m, comprising \$24.6m from the Commonwealth and \$16m from NSW. NCOSS proposed a 20% or \$44.7m increase from the state government in 2009-10 to begin to address significant unmet need in NSW. Priorities for this year will be the second stage of the capital strategy for dementia day care facilities; the acquisition in 2009-10 of the final two years' Triennial Plan priorities; the restorative or independence (in NSW we know this as IMPACT) approach; and strategies to progress common arrangements. NCOSS called for increased spending on greater capacity in HACC services, improved Aboriginal service provision and cultural diversity provision, viability to providers in real terms and greater flexibility.

The Home Care Service of NSW

The Home Care Service NSW budget allocation increases by 1.6% or \$2.7m. This is effectively a cut in real terms, after a budget overrun last year of \$14m. The slight drop in delivered hours last year was explained by problems in recruiting. Home Care expects to deliver 3.87 million hours of service in 2009-10.

Disability Services

The fourth year of the ten year *Stronger Together* Disability Plan has been fully funded at \$50.6m in 2009-10. *Stronger Together* contains five year's spending measures and NCOSS looks to the Government for the second five year tranche. NCOSS called for an increase of \$55.6m in addition to the planned *Stronger Together* spending to accelerate desperately needed disability supports. Increases this year include \$45.8m to 349 new supported accommodation places; \$23.5m for 319 Attendant Care places; \$17.2m for 800 Flexible Respite places; \$10.6m for up to 1,000 new post school places; \$3m for 600 intensive support packages; \$5.6m for the younger people in residential aged care program. NCOSS maintains that all new and redeveloped supported accommodation places must comply with the NSW Disability Services Act.

"Stronger Together contains five year's spending measures and NCOSS looks to the Government for the second five year tranche."

Disability Industry Development / Futures Fund

A new \$17m Disability Industry Development/Futures Fund will be jointly administered by DADHC and National Disability Services NSW. Specifically for disability service providers, the fund is designed to offer ongoing capacity building initiatives to providers, which will improve sector efficiencies, reduce red tape and increase outcomes for people with disability and their families.

Ageing Program

Funding to the Ageing Program has been maintained at \$5.9m in this budget, representing a cut in real terms. There have been no increases to this program, despite the rapid ageing of the population, in several

years. There are concerns that the Office for Ageing has been placed under the new Communities cluster rather than Human Services. Minister Lynch is confident this will be changed shortly. NCOSS calls for an increase of \$4.54m for *Towards 2030* priorities and improved access for Aboriginal people to Seniors Card benefits have not been met.

Capital Expenditure

In 2009-10 DADHC capital expenditure is up 26%, an increase of \$145.4m. This includes \$60m for accommodation facilities for existing clients; \$24.3m redevelop Peat Island facility; \$19.2m for accommodation for new clients; \$10.8m upgrades for DADHC supported accommodation; \$10m for older carers program; \$6.2m develop Lachlan as a centre for people with challenging behaviours and \$10.8m for DADHC minor works and pre-planning.

National Disability Agreement

COAG has replaced the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement CSTDA with the National Disability Agreement NDA, which totals \$1.712 billion in NSW. This comprises 17.6% or \$302.1m from the Commonwealth and 82.4% or \$1.410billion from NSW. As well as the CSTDA, the NDA incorporates the Disability Assistance Package, Respite for Older Carers and the Younger People with Disability in residential aged care program.

Programs of Aids for Disabled People (PADP)

This NSW Health Program has increased by \$5m recurrent. NCOSS and the PADP Community Alliance called for an increase of \$24.4m in 2009-10 with planned additional growth over five years. While grateful for this recurrent increase, NCOSS is very concerned at the delay in badly needed investment during the EnableNSW restructure and the national harmonisation strategy.

■ Attorney General's

The Attorney General's Department (AGD) aims to ensure the delivery of government priorities to reduce crime, reoffending, anti-social behavior and

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improve customer services. The budget for the AGD overall is increased only by a little over the CPI (2.5%) which is a 1.3% decrease on the revised budget of 2008-09. The revised budget is the actual money that a department expects to spend in the 2008-09 financial year. When indexation is taken into account, there is an even further reduction in funding to the AGD.

The AGD is estimated to invest \$42m in 2009-10 into court services infrastructure. This is a 17.4% decrease on the 2008-09 budget. Major investment programs include \$12.6m for the Court Upgrade Program, \$9.3m for the development and implementation of the new Joined Up Justice and Legal eServices systems and \$20.1m for a range of minor building and other works including \$6m for the continuing roll out of remote witness and closed circuit television facilities.

Initiatives under *Keep them Safe* include \$2.1m to increase the use of alternate dispute resolution in children's courts and \$165,000 for night patrols in smaller and remote communities. It is important to note that this is a disappointingly minor investment in community-based preventative alternative approaches to putting children and young people through the legal system and the commitment that is made appears to be couched in very cautious terms.

The AGD also funds the Crime Prevention and Community Services Program. This program is responsible for the development of evidence based policies to prevent crime and reduce re-offending, to reduce Aboriginal involvement in criminal justice processes and promote anti-discrimination and equal opportunity principles and policies. It also covers Victims of Crime. The Budget for 2009-10 is a 0.7% increase on the revised budget of 2008-09, however when indexation is taken to account this is an actual reduction in funding. This is the second consecutive year in which funding to this program has seen a decrease. This is interesting to note in light of the State Plan where priorities R1 and R2 are about reducing crime and reoffending.

■ Community Services

For 2009-10 the Department of Community Services' budget will be increased by around \$216m or 14.1% in real terms from the 2008-09 budget.

However, DoCS' expenditure for 2008-09 is projected to be around \$101m over the budget forecast (reflecting the minibudget and the implementation of the *Keep Them Safe* action plan). This means that (if DoCS can keep to budget in 2009-10) the actual increase will be around 6.0% in real terms.

The increases in expenditure (totalling \$750m of five years) reflect initiatives announced by the Government and welcomed by NCOSS in the *Keep Them Safe* action plan:

- more places for children in out-of-home care;
- intensive help for Aboriginal families where children are at risk of serious harm;
- trial a new model for keeping children in Aboriginal families safe, that involves child protection workers working with Aboriginal family and community members;
- expansion of the Brighter Futures early intervention program;
- integrated case management with families who are in contact with multiple agencies in the child protection system; and
- a range of other evidence based prevention and early intervention services, such as family support services and sustained health home visiting.

"The emphasis in the DoCS budget is to continue to fund the symptoms of child neglect and abuse rather than address the causes of disadvantage and poverty through universal service provision."

The Children's Services budget has had a significant increase the result of \$21.3m from the Commonwealth Government for universal access to a preschool program in the year before school.

There was no increase for the Community Services Grants Program (CSGP) as requested by NCOSS, LCSA, NSW Family Services, YAPA, the Local Government and Shires Association and countless neighbourhood centres, youth services and family support services. There are substantial increases in funding for Out of Home Care and Brighter Futures, reflecting the Government's commitments in the *Keep Them Safe* action plan.

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neglect and abuse rather than address the causes of disadvantage and poverty through universal service provision.

■ Corrective Services

The Department of Corrective Services has a 2.8% increase on the 2008-09 budget, but a 4.5% decrease on the revised 2008-09 budget. The increase on the 2008-09 budget is minor when indexation is factored in. Programs and initiatives under the Department include two programs under *Keep them Safe: Mothering at a Distance* and *Hey Dad!* for Indigenous dads, uncles and pops. Other initiatives include \$6m for the detection, screening, detox and education of general and high risk drug offender groups, \$14.3m increase in costs associated with increased offender numbers and \$2m for the continuation of drug court operations.

\$129.7m has been invested for capital works including \$93.7m for the construction of 1,000 inmate beds to increase capacity.

The custody management service group works to provide a secure environment for inmates, employees and visitors as well as providing special service needs for inmates like mental health, disability and specific needs related to age and Aboriginality. In 2009-10 the budget is a 4% decrease on the 2008-09 revised budget which is worse when indexation is factored in. This is disappointing considering this service group works towards achieving the State Plan Priority (R2) Reducing Reoffending and the strategic directions of the Department of Corrective Services by providing vital access to personal development programs and encouragement to participate in programs aimed at reducing re-offending.

The Supervision of Offenders Programs provides delivery of offender programs in the community. The budget in 2009-10 is a welcome 10.4% increase on the 2008-09 budget after 2.4% indexation is factored in. This is however a 5.75% decrease on the 2008-09 revised budget. The service measures of this group do not change from 2008-09 to 2009-10 and it is uncertain if this indicates no increase of community based orders or an increased focus on custodial sentences.

The Offender Programs Service Group is designed to reduce the risks of re-offending and provide support services to offenders to help them re-settle and integrate into the community. This

program utilises partnerships with government and non-government agencies to provide community support. This budget has a 14.75% increase on the 2008-09 budget from \$133,489 to \$153,173. This demonstrates a welcome commitment to supporting offenders and still remains a significant increase if indexation is removed. However, it is a 6% decrease on the 2008-09 revised budget which is disappointing given that the above two programs that are aimed at reducing re-offending have also decreased in budget.

■ Domestic and Family Violence

Department of Premier and Cabinet- Office for Women

The Office for Women has received \$2.9m in 2009-10, no increase on the 2008-09 budget. In effect, once indexation is factored in, this is a decrease. Included within this funding is \$900,000 worth of projects aimed specifically at Aboriginal people and \$512,000 for the Violence Against Women Unit.

Housing NSW

Housing NSW has allocated \$16m over four years for a private rental subsidy scheme aimed at helping women with children escaping domestic violence obtain and maintain a safe home in the private rental market.

Department of Community Services

Under DoCS, the *Staying Home Leaving Violence* program which assists women and children to remain safely in their family home will be extended to Blacktown, Campbelltown, Wyong, Walgett, Newcastle and Moree. The cost to extend the program is approximately \$1.356m in the 2009-10 year.

NSW Police

NSW police is employing an additional 20 police officers to work in areas with high levels of domestic violence. It is also committing \$545,000 for additional Domestic Violence liaison officers in Wagga Wagga and Campbelltown and two project officers to support the Domestic Violence International Court Model.

Legal Aid

Legal Aid is receiving an extra \$2.6m each year for the next three years for the Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program. This program assists women and children to obtain

legal protection from Domestic Violence with the help of legal representation, specialised assistance from social welfare professionals and referrals to appropriate services.

■ Environment and Climate Change

The NSW Government's Climate Change Fund receives a huge boost in the 2009-10 budget going from \$74m in 2008-09 (\$98m on revised expenditure after a mini-budget enhancement) to \$208m in 2009-10. This includes funding for a range of activities including energy and water saving schemes.

"This is contrary to research which demonstrates that effective health service systems place primary and community care at the core of delivery."

Of particular interest to NCOSS is the *Low Income Household Refit* Program which will receive \$15.3m in 2009-10. This Refit Program, which moved from the pilot phase in early 2009, assists low income households to reduce their energy bills by around \$100 per year by providing free advice and energy saving devices such as compact fluorescent light globes.

■ Health

It is difficult to determine the NSW Government expenditure on Health in the 2009-10 Budget as the State has received extensive income from COAG reforms including the National Healthcare Agreement and the National Partnerships Payments. The total Health Budget in 2009-10 is \$14,487,880 which is a 10% increase on the 2008-09 budget (\$13,150,697) and a 5% increase on the 2008-09 revised budget (\$13,797,298). Health is one of the few agencies where spending above the previous Budget has not been reined in, in the 2009-10 budget.

The Health budget focuses on three major government initiatives; Caring together-Response to the Garling Report, COAG reforms and initiatives under *Keep them Safe*.

Caring Together- Response to the Garling Report

NSW Health has assigned a majority of funding to the acute care system, mirroring the statement in the budget papers that 'acute care services are

at the core of the NSW Public Health System'. This is contrary to research which demonstrates that effective health service systems place primary and community care at the core of delivery. The budget allocates \$117m to place patients at the centre of the health care system by providing services that are safe, competent and compassionate. It is, however, unclear how the government intends to use the budget to create safe, competent and compassionate services. \$176m over four years has been allocated for 500 additional ward based clinical support officers for doctors and nurses. Funding has also been included for clinical pharmacists, emergency physicians reform remuneration, positive culture and training programs to reduce bullying, junior medical doctors, cleaning services, specialist training positions in rural and metropolitan areas and 30 new Clinical Initiative Nurses. \$3m of funding has been designated for support staff to ensure single sex rooms wherever possible as well as \$2.3m for IPTAAS, however, it is unclear whether this is in addition to current funding.

COAG Reforms

The National Healthcare Agreement covers prevention, primary and community health, hospital and related care, aged care, patient care and Aboriginal Health and sustainability. It is estimated that in the 09-10 budget, the NSW Government will receive \$3.7b (\$16.2b over a four year period) including \$454m over four years for the Hospital and Health Workforce reform. Over the next four years COAG will also provide NSW Health with:

- \$180m for Indigenous Health;
- \$21m for Indigenous early childhood;
- \$74m for health services;
- \$10m for infrastructure; and
- \$122m for elective surgery reduction plan.

Keep them Safe

Under the NSW *Keep them Safe* initiative, NSW Health will receive:

- \$3.6m for Child Wellbeing Unit;
- \$2m for further trials of sustained health home visiting for vulnerable families;
- \$3.6m to NGOs to establish Regional Intake and Referral Services;
- \$2m for services for families where the parents have a mental illness;

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- \$3m for coordination of health assessments for children and young people in out of home care;
- \$2m for services for families where the parents have drug and alcohol issues; and
- \$1.9m for new therapeutic programs for children and young people who display abusive behaviour.

The NSW Health budget figures do not provide enough detail to undertake a comprehensive analysis of health spending for the community sector, however, the following information has been obtained from the budget papers.

Population Health

The Population Health budget for 2009-10 is a 30% increase in funding on the 2008-09 budget. However, this is a 14.5% decrease on the revised budget. It is disappointing that the budget does not maintain the higher revised budget levels given the priorities of the State Plan (F4) - embedding prevention and early intervention into government services and the State Health Plan to make prevention everybody's business.

Primary and Community Based Services

In the 2009-10 budget, \$1,117,311m is allocated to Primary and Community based services, a 9% increase on the 2008-09 budget which shows an increasing commitment to such an important and essential part of the health system.

NGOs are funded under the voluntary organisations account line within this section, though it is difficult to determine how much is directly for NGOs as other services are also included under this budget line. In 2009-10 the budget is a 0.4% decrease on the 2008-09 budget. This implies that the actual budget for 2009-10 is even less once indexation is removed. It should also be noted that the 2008-09 budget was under spent by 5.9% which may reflect the savings sought through the mini-budget. NCOSS is still seeking the actual amount for NGOs from NSW Health.

Mental Health

The budget in 2009-10 is a 7% increase on the 2008-09 budget. This is the fourth year of the Government's commitment *A New Direction for Mental Health* which injects \$12m into mental health this year including \$10m in community mental health funding. The 2009-10 budget meets State commitments by

allocating \$2.3m to enhance specialist mental health services for older people, \$2.9m to expand 24 hour community mental health emergency care, \$3.5m to expand mental health rehabilitation in the community and \$3.8m for the Aboriginal Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative.

Aboriginal Health

In 2008-09 a \$19.1m over four years funding commitment was announced for Building Strong Foundations for Aboriginal Children, Families and Communities strategy which builds on the Aboriginal maternal and infant health strategy. This is the second year of the Building Strong Foundations strategy which will be increased from \$2.7m in 2008-09 to \$5.5m in 2009-10. The 2009-10 Aboriginal Health budget has had a 45% increase on the 2008-09 budget.

"The NSW Health budget figures do not provide enough detail to undertake a comprehensive analysis of health spending for the community sector"

Oral Health

The budget papers provide \$1.1m of funding to Orange hospital for dental services, and an aim to provide 1.3m occasions of service which is 1,000 more than 2008-09. No other obvious funding allocation to oral health can be found within the papers.

Homelessness

The Budget does not include funding for the NSW Homelessness Action Plan as the development of that plan is still being completed. The Action Plan will incorporate the NSW Implementation Plan under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (Homelessness NP). When agreed with the Commonwealth, the Homelessness NP (including previously separate funding under the Commonwealth's A Place to Call Home initiative) is expected to include total funding of \$283.9m over five years. This funding will be distributed across a number of NSW portfolios.

Meanwhile funding for capital projects for homelessness services under the Crisis Accommodation Program, in the Housing portfolio, is a modest \$15.5m in 2009-10. This is a real increase of 9.5% on the previous year's allocation of \$13.9m.

There has been no real increase in funding for SAAP services, in the Community Services portfolio. SAAP is now partly funded under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). DoCS have said that SAAP services will receive indexation of 2.4% in 2009-10. NCOSS believes that SAAP services should receive the same level of indexation as all other DoCS NGO funding programs.

Housing

The 2009-10 Budget contains substantial additional funding for the construction of extra social housing, and for repairs, maintenance and upgrades to existing social housing dwellings.

The overall budget for the Housing Policy and Assistance Program, including Aboriginal Housing Office elements, increases from \$894.9m in 2008-09 to \$2,599m in 2009-10. Just over two thirds of this funding is sourced from the Commonwealth (\$1,745.7 million), with the balance from agency internal funds (\$423.5m), assets sales (\$230.7m) and state funding (\$199.1m).

Within the Housing Policy and Assistance Program the biggest funding increases are on the capital side, with the budget for Long Term Social Housing Supply increasing from \$391.1m to \$1,636m, and for Social Housing Asset Management up from \$367.0m to \$656.5m.

Long Term Social Housing Supply

Given the well documented levels of homelessness and housing stress facing low income households, it is good to see the Federal and NSW Governments working together at last to build much needed extra social housing.

Funding to expand supply is largely sourced from Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan (\$1,261.5m), the COAG National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing (\$95.2m), *A Place to Call Home* (\$6.4m), as well as from base funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and state funds.

NSW is committed to construct 6,500 extra dwellings under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan by March 2011. The milestones set by the Commonwealth under this agreement are as follows:

- 850 dwellings by April 2010;
- another 4,025 by September 2010; and
- a further 1,625 by March 2011.

These extra dwellings will consist of a mixture of redevelopment of existing sites owned by Housing NSW, and acquisitions from the private sector. The redevelopment of existing sites will necessarily involve some disruption for tenants, and the sector will be keen to see that Housing NSW handles the relocation process as sensitively as possible, building on the lessons learnt from the Minto and Bonnyrigg redevelopments.

A further 580-600 new dwellings will be built over two years under the National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing (Social Housing NP).

The NSW Government has said that the vast majority of new dwellings under the Stimulus Package, and all the dwellings under the Social Housing NP, will be allocated to the community housing sector, to assist in achieving the growth target set out in *Planning for the Future: new directions for community housing in NSW*.

The social housing growth plans outlined in the Budget, combined with parallel growth under the National Rental Affordability Scheme, while well known beforehand, are a very significant down payment towards the Five Year Plan to expand the provision of affordable rental housing that was advocated by NCOSS in its Pre-Budget Submission *Towards Triple A Rated Community Services*. However, the Social Housing NP funding ends in 2009-10 and the stimulus package funding in 2011-12. Sustained investment by both the Commonwealth and NSW Governments will be required over the medium term if significant progress is to be made in reducing the number of households in housing stress and those at risk of homelessness. There is also a need to make greater use of the planning system to leverage increased provision of affordable housing.

Social Housing Asset Management

The Budget includes substantially increased spending on improvements to social housing dwellings, including major upgrade works, planned repairs and increased efforts to overcome the maintenance backlog.

Housing NSW has also received funding through the Climate Change Fund of \$17.8m over four years to replace 12,000 electric hot water heaters with solar hot water heaters, continue the installation of water-saving devices and the installation of ceiling insulation. NCOSS had advocated action along

these lines in its Pre-Budget Submission for 2008-09.

Aboriginal Housing Office

The 2009-10 Budget for the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) is \$81.17m, of which \$49.443m is allocated to the AHO Housing Policy and Assistance Program. This is an apparent reduction in the 2008-09 allocations of \$92.8m and \$66.6m respectively.

"...it is good to see the Federal and NSW Governments working together at last to build much needed extra social housing."

These figures do not, however, include funding from the Commonwealth under the COAG under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (RIH NP), as the NSW Implementation Plan had not been agreed as at the date of the budget. NSW has been promised a total of \$397m under that Agreement, including \$63.2m in 2009-10. That would appear to significantly increase the budget for the AHO Housing Policy and Assistance Program. However, the Commonwealth is insisting that its RIH NP funding can only be spent in remote areas of NSW, so the broader pressures facing the AHO seem likely to continue. The AHO has to date operated under a pooled funding model, combining federal, state and internal funds but it is not allowed to pool the RIH NP funds.

Other programs

Keep Them Safe

The Budget includes \$2.6m over four years for Housing NSW's contribution to the *Keep Them Safe* child protection reforms, including the establishment of a housing Child Wellbeing Unit.

Safe Start rental program for women escaping DV

The Budget includes funding for the commencement of Safe Start, a new private rental subsidy scheme for women and children escaping from domestic violence. The scheme is similar to existing private rental subsidy programs run by Housing NSW for people with HIV/AIDS and with a disability.

Initial funding of \$4m has been provided for *Safe Start* in 2009-10, to assist 370 households, as part of a four year \$16m plan to assist 1,650

households. This is positive initiative which NCOSS warmly welcomes.

National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS)

The Budget includes state funding contributions for new affordable housing under the Commonwealth's National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS). Under existing approvals the number of NRAS dwellings in NSW will increase from 404 in 2008-09 to 876 in 2009-10.

There are a large number of further NRAS B subsidies available to complete the establishment phase of the scheme. It was disappointing, however, that the Budget did not include funding for any further NRAS A subsidies to community housing providers from the NSW Government's Affordable Housing Innovations Fund. All money held in that Fund has now been committed. In its Pre Budget Submission NCOSS had sought Affordable Housing Innovations Fund top up funding of \$20m in 2009-10 and \$100m over five years.

Instead the State Government has allocated \$64m to give stamp duty relief for new housing built in the next six months, under its NSW Housing Acceleration Plan. Under this measure stamp duty will be cut by 50% for people buying new dwellings worth up to \$600,000, saving purchasers up to \$11,245 per property. (First home owners are already exempt from stamp duty for purchases of up to \$500,000).

NCOSS believes the new concession is poorly targeted and will do nothing to increase access to affordable housing. The \$64m would have been better invested in the Affordable Housing Innovations Fund to assist community housing providers establish further affordable housing projects.

Housing and Human Services Accord

The Budget did not include any specific funding to expand the provision of joined up (housing plus support) service delivery under the NSW Housing and Human Services Accord. In its Pre-Budget Submission NCOSS had sought an initial allocation of \$30m for this purpose. We will continue to advocate on this agenda as Accord type approaches will be required to successfully implement a range of Commonwealth and NSW reform agendas in the human services sector, including the White Paper on Homelessness.

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■ Juvenile Justice

In a welcome announcement, \$2.34m has been allocated in 2009-10 for the establishment and operation of a Bail Hotline for young people under 18 years being held by the police. The aim is to reduce the number of young people remanded into custody. The details are being finalised by the Department. An evaluation will be conducted from the commencement of the Hotline.

Capital funding of \$1.93m has been allocated to the Department to establish a pre-release unit at Reiby Juvenile Justice Centre. This is a unit is being designed to house low risk detainees who are preparing for release from custody. It will include young men originally from Sydney who served the bulk of their sentences outside Sydney.

Funding to NGOs by program is outlined in the table below.

Total funding for the NGO accommodation and post release support programs has increased substantially. However, funding for the Education and Skills Program has declined. NCOSS is seeking further information on the reasons for these changes.

■ Legal Aid and Community Legal Centres

Legal Aid and Community Legal Centres contribute to the government priorities of reduced rates of crime, recidivism and anti-social behaviour. The 2009-10 Budget is a 3% increase on the 2008-09 budget, however a 9% decrease on the 2009 revised budget. In real terms, the funding for Legal Aid (including the core funding for community legal centres) has increased by only approximately 2% which is less than CPI. NCOSS is currently investigating the reason behind the cut on the revised 2008-09 budget.

Table: Juvenile Justice NGO funding by program

| Funded NGO Services | 2008-09 (\$m) | 2009-10 (\$m) |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Alcohol and Other Drugs | \$2,381,896 | \$2,439,539 |
| Accommodation | \$1,018,072 | \$1,205,222 |
| Post Release | \$1,413,270 | \$1,520,260 |
| Local Offender | \$469,327 | \$480,687 |
| Education and Skills | \$624,355 | \$566,672 |

The budget includes the increase in the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program funding of \$2.6m to expand the service from 71 to 107 courts. As a result of an internal review of the program in 2008, there has also been a small upgrade in the salary rates payable to advocacy workers employed under the program.

The increase in funding is good news; however it is important to note that it does not address the emerging unmet need arising from changes to the child protection regime as a result of the Wood Review and the impact of the global financial crisis on employment, families, debts, and housing. Funding available to legal aid and community legal centres to address these civil law problems remains inadequate. The \$520,000 allocated from the public purpose fund for legal assistance in relation to mortgage stress will soon be exhausted.

It is also unclear how the predicted increase of nearly 40% in the number of civil law matters assigned by Legal Aid will be funded.

Just over \$700,000 has been allocated to Victim and Witness Support Services – a small increase on last year. Apart from a biannual satisfaction survey and producing a new brochure, there is little indication of what services victims of crime are actually receiving for this substantial sum, and how effective they are.

The Public Trustee administers deceased estates and powers of attorney and is mostly self-funded by fees charged for estate administration. In the 2009-10 budget, the Public Trustee receives \$2.4m to be the 'administrator of last resort' for valueless estates. From 1 July the Public Trustee and the Office of the Protective Commissioner will be merged. The impact of the merger has not been included in this Budget estimate. Amalgamations generally have not yet been examined.

The Criminal Law Service Group provides legal assistance and counsel to those facing criminal charges. The 2009-10 budget is a 12% decrease on the 2008-09 revised budget and a 3.3% decrease on the 2008-09 budget.

However, if indexation is taken into account, this program has had an even further reduction in funding. This is of concern as there is an expectation that the numbers of people seeking assistance under the program will increase by 2,392 people.

The Civil Law Service Group provides advice on matters such as housing, consumer and human rights law with a strong emphasis on protection of legal rights in disadvantaged communities. The 2009-10 Budget is a 2% increase on the 2008-09 revised budget, however it can be speculated that the increase is only indexation. NCOSS is currently investigating the reason behind the cut on the revised 2008-09 budget.

The Community Partnerships Service Group provides funding of community organisations for specific purposes, particularly to provide specialised assistance for women and children seeking legal protection from domestic violence. The 2009-10 budget is a 4% increase on the 2009 revised budget, however if indexation is factored in the increase is even less.

■ Transport

There are two main themes in this transport budget: the creation of the Transport 'super department' and the large increase in infrastructure spending.

The Government tells us that this is an increase of 68% on the infrastructure spending from the previous year. While most of this increase has already been announced, the Government is providing the funding to follow through on these major infrastructure projects. It is debatable if the projected \$4.9b total cost of the Metro is the best use of this substantial capital spend; the Metro accounts for \$581m of the capital budget for the 2009-10 year.

There are large spending commitments to increase the bus fleets for both STA and the private bus service providers. There are significant purchases of new rail carriages for CityRail and the XPT and the facilities to maintain them. There are significant commitments to continue the Rail Clearways program. There is investment to continue the bus priority infrastructure programs. Many people will be happy with the continued expansion of the program to build new commuter car parking at suburban stations.

The creation of the 'NSW Transport Department' is not really part of the budget but was announced in the lead up to the budget. It does appear, however, to be a good initiative which many transport experts and advocates have been calling for, for many years. It is crucial that this new Department can integrate the planning and operational responsibilities of the Government so

that we end up with a truly integrated public transport system where people can travel on one ticket, make easy transfers between modes and easily get to where they need to go. It is also crucial that this be coordinated and integrated with the land use planning system. This is the only way to improve the sustainability and social inclusion outcomes we are after.

Social Inclusion and Transport

While these increases in the big infrastructure spending and mainstream transport programs are welcomed - by improving the mainstream travel services they will improve the social inclusion outcomes - there are a number of programs that specifically target the social inclusion agenda.

There is a real decrease of 3% (1% actual) from the 2008-09 budget to "Targeted Transport Services". This is the program which deals with community transport, concessions and other programs focusing on social inclusion.

There has been a slight real increase of 2.6% (4.6% actual) in the HACC component of Community Transport but no change in the Community Transport Program part.

The \$2.4m for the introduction of the Electronic Payment System for the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) is welcomed and will make the use of the much easier for the customers, people living with severe mobility disabilities, and taxi drivers.

The \$1 holiday fare deal for children travelling with adults on CountryLink has been extended to a year-round service and the CountryLink booking fee for pensioners who use their free travel vouchers has been removed. While previously announced, this budget supports these concessions to be consolidated as normal programs. These are good initiatives for rural people who can not take advantage of some of the concessions provided to metropolitan people.

The budget projects that the proportion of time-tabled buses that are accessible will increase from 42% in 2008-09 to 47% in 2009-10 - a similar increase from the previous year. Unfortunately this program is not linked to the provision of accessible bus stop infrastructure.

The budget allocates \$30.1m to the Easy Access program to upgrade stations to make them accessible. While this commitment is welcomed, this funding allocation represents the upgrade of

only five stations. Given that there has only been about 100 of the 304 CityRail stations upgraded, it means that this program, despite being ahead of their Federal legislative requirements, is going to take a long time to provide access to stations for people with mobility problems. Given the size of the increase in the infrastructure budget it would have been good to give this Easy Access program more priority.

Health Related Transport

There has been an increase in the ambulance staffing budget to increase the on-road staff by 95 in the Sydney area.

For rural people there have been several important initiatives supported in the budget. There has been an allocation of \$500,000 to the Cancer Institute for rural patient transport subsidies. There has also been an increase of \$2.3m for the Isolated Patient Travel and Accommodation Scheme (IPTAAS).

Under the Indigenous Health National Plan the States and the Commonwealth are providing money to improve indigenous health. This is listed as \$180m over four years. One of the items listed in this program is "improving patient journeys" but there is no detail at this stage how the program is going to be divided up.

The Budget in Relation to the NCOSS Pre-Budget Submission

The increase of the IPTAAS is good but NCOSS suggested an increase of \$10.4m and made several suggestions designed to make it easier for people to access. NCOSS suggested abolishing the administrative charges and making the IPTAAS payments up-front to patients rather than patients having to be reimbursed.

There is no new money for the Community Transport Program (CTP), currently \$3.9m per year, despite many years of advocating for it. The State Opposition has pledged to double the Community Transport Program. A doubling of \$3.9m represents about 0.00125 of the increased money committed to transport infrastructure projects in the budget or only one thousandth of the transport services budget; a very small amount in the context of the transport budget and compared to the benefits that could be received. NCOSS suggested an increase of \$7m.

The problem of funding 'Community Kilometres' remains unsolved in this budget despite this program being

suggested as part of the Bus Review, which is now nearly complete, and despite the fact that it is part of the bus service contracts. This program was to be part of the Bus Review reforms designed to help provide services to people who are disadvantaged by the Bus Review. At this stage there are no suggestions about how this program might work or be funded despite plenty of evidence that there are indeed people disadvantaged by the Bus Network Review.

It appears from the Budget Papers there has not been an allocation to increase the number of Aboriginal transport projects as suggested in the NCOSS PBS. While the Budget Papers describe the work of the Metropolitan Transport Coordinators there is no detail at a project level. At this stage, departmental advice indicates that there is no change to the budget from previous years to provide any additional projects.

Water and Energy

The Government has confirmed that it has brought forward the \$272m, five year customer protection package to help cushion low income households from of substantial increases in electricity prices due on 1 July 2009. The package includes:

- an increase in the Pensioner Energy Rebate from \$112 per annum to \$130 per annum (and indexing it to inflation)
- an extension of the rebate to include recipients of Carers Allowances (child under 16), Sickness Allowances and Special Benefits;
- an increase in funding for the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance scheme;
- a customer assistance package with details yet to be announced.

The cost of the rebates arising from the increase in value and the extension to more people will increase from \$77m in 2008-09 to \$103m 2009-10. The total cost of the EAPA scheme will increase from \$9m in 2008-09 to \$20.6m in 2009-10. NCOSS is expecting the customer assistance package to total \$125m over five years.

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