



**Homelessness
NSW.ACT**



In a year of exceptional budget surplus the Government says no to the homeless.

Joint campaign launched to maintain and expand homeless services in NSW

Four key peak community organizations have today launched a campaign to highlight the urgent need for additional Commonwealth funding for NSW services that assist the homeless.

The launch of the campaign coincides with Sydney hosting the Fourth National Homeless Conference at Darling Harbour from 1 to 3 March.

According to the Director of the Council of Social Service, Gary Moore, the key factor prompting the campaign was the Commonwealth's failure to provide adequate funding under the latest five year agreement for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP).

'NSW services have been left out in the cold under the new agreement, with base funding frozen (except for indexation) and no funding for innovation pilots until 2008-09,' Mr Moore said.

'This outcome ignores the findings of the Government's own commissioned evaluation, which concluded that an extra 15% was needed just to maintain the viability of existing services.'

'It says that an extra 35%-40% would be needed to also expand existing service capacity and implement new ways of working.'

Executive Officer of HomelessnessNSW.ACT, Sue Cripps, says it is clear that the state's 386 SAAP services cannot continue to operate at existing levels with inadequate funding.

'Following the welcome findings of the national evaluation, services were entitled to expect that the new agreement would address chronic under-funding and insufficient bed numbers', Ms Cripps said.

'Instead they have received what is effectively a five year funding freeze.'

Executive Officer of the NSW Women's Resource Centre, Catherine Gander, says 'women's refuges are turning away women and children escaping domestic violence on a daily basis because they are full. These women are often forced to return with their

children to the violent home they have just fled. It is unacceptable and hardly the response expected from a Government's that has just spent millions on the campaign telling the public that 'Australia says No to Domestic violence'.

'The Federal Government's funding response is made more shameful when the same government who can't find any extra dollars to assist some of Australia's most vulnerable projects a \$10 billion plus budget surplus.

'Domestic violence is the largest single cause of homelessness.

'Last year homeless services in NSW helped 24,150 clients and a further 10,750 accompanying children.

'Every day more than 45% of clients seeking accommodation have to be turned away because services are full.

Executive officer of the Youth Accommodation Association, Michael Coffey, says NSW has been penalized for its previous good record in funding services for the homeless.

'What little extra Commonwealth funding that there is has gone to those States and Territories that previously provided less than 50% of the cost of SAAP funding,' Mr Coffey said.

'The Commonwealth has apparently rewarded them for agreeing to increase the 50% target by year three of the new agreement.

'NSW has long provided more than 50% of the funding, but missed out on any increase in base funding.

We will be highlighting to the new Minister for Community Services, John Cobb MP, just what a bad deal his home State received' said Mr Coffey.

'Young people who are homelessness in NSW should get the appropriate level of services and support that they deserve'.

The campaign seeks the support of community organizations and the general public to seek additional funding for homeless services in NSW in the 2006-07 Federal Budget.

Background material on the campaign is available online at <http://ncoss.org.au/saap/index.html>

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