

24 May 2018

The Hon Robert Brown MLC
Chair
Legislative Council Public Works Committee
Parliament of New South Wales
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

By email: Public.Works@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Re: Inquiry into the Sydney stadiums strategy

Dear Mr Brown,

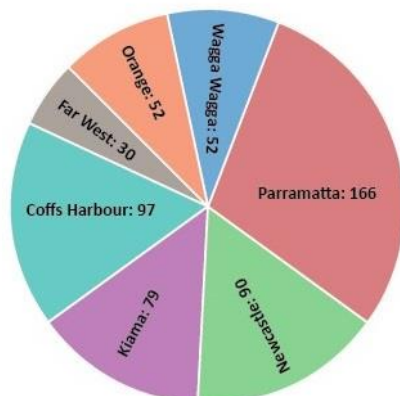
Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this inquiry.

The NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) works with and for people experiencing poverty and disadvantage in NSW to make positive change in our communities. As the peak body for health and community services in NSW, for over 80 years we have supported the sector to deliver crucial services that make a difference.

Over the past few years, NCOSS has toured the state to hear directly from metro, regional, rural and remote communities about their priorities and experiences, particularly for vulnerable communities and those experiencing poverty and disadvantage. Based on the rich and diverse information we continue to gather from these consultations, we strongly believe that the funds needed to implement the Sydney stadiums strategy (stadium strategy) would be better spent in other areas. Areas where they would make a social impact and improve the lives of the most vulnerable in our community should be prioritised. This includes measures to address the disadvantage faced in rural and regional communities, where people have access to fewer services and facilities (including sporting facilities).

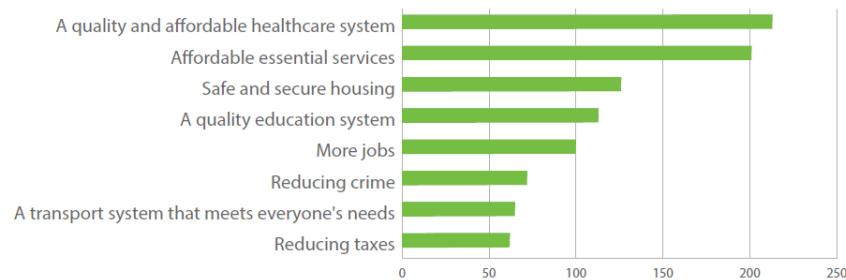
What do our communities say will make a difference to the challenges they face?

In October last year, NCOSS released our 2018/19 Pre-Budget Submission (PBS) [No Poverty: A roadmap for a fair NSW](#) (copy attached). Our PBS was the culmination of extensive research, analysis, consultation, discussion and debate. We held 38 workshops and spoke to approximately 570 people across NSW to discuss the key challenges communities face and solutions that would allow them to overcome those challenges.

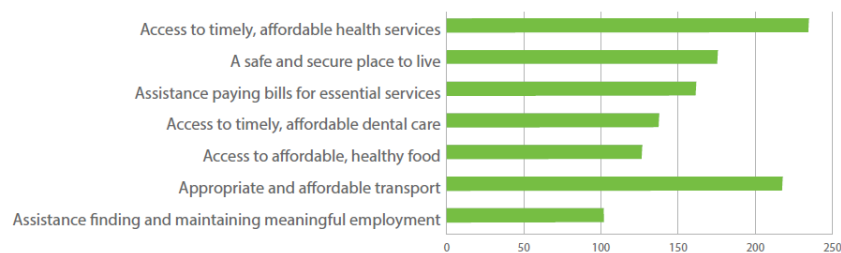


We also engaged directly with people at risk of poverty and disadvantage via our [Cost of Living survey](#) (copy attached) of over 400 households living below the poverty line. We asked not only what would make a difference in their own lives, but what the top priorities for the NSW Government should be.

Thinking about the NSW Government, their policies and the policies of other political parties in NSW. What do you think should be their highest priority?



Thinking about yourself and your family, which of the following would make the biggest difference?



Based on the feedback we received, NCOSS has identified seven key areas where the NSW Government can make distinct and targeted investments to improve outcomes for people experiencing poverty and disadvantage:

- Give children and young people the best start in life
- Create homes for our most vulnerable
- Make energy affordable
- Boost support for people with mental health issues
- Build a fair justice system for Aboriginal communities
- Financially empower women throughout their life cycle
- Give a voice to all people with disability.

We commend the NSW Government on its decision in March this year to refurbish rather than demolish the Sydney Olympic Stadium and reiterate that there are better ways to use government funding to build a better, fairer society.

The Premier's recent announcement of \$26 million transitional funding to disability advocacy and information organisations, which was one of NCOSS's core PBS recommendations, is a good start. We urge that government funding be put to better use, such as this, by investing in the targeted outcomes in our PBS. This would make a difference to our most vulnerable communities.

NSW Government investment should target regional communities

NCOSS is currently consulting in 18 communities across regional NSW, with a further 5 conferences planned in Lake Macquarie, Ballina, Wagga Wagga, Dubbo and Kiama for August/September this year. Already, communities are confirming what we already know; that we need more significant, targeted investment in regional NSW to alleviate the tyranny of distance and its impact on individuals' and communities' access to opportunity and vital services. The lack of affordable and social housing in regional NSW is particularly problematic, with some communities telling us that there is significantly less investment in social housing in regional NSW compared to metropolitan NSW.

In the context of this inquiry, any strategy which aims to improve participation in sporting activities should:

- have an appropriate and more equitable focus on regional communities; and
- focus on encouraging active rather than passive participation in sport.

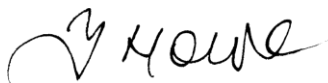
We know that regional communities often have less access to state of the art facilities, and are less able to participate in community activities to the same extent as metro communities. Indeed, our members stressed that regional communities have poorer access to fresh public drinking water. Any stadium strategy should seek to remedy this regional divide, so that all in our community can access sporting facilities on an equal basis.

There should also be an emphasis on active participation in sport rather than passive viewing. We know that children from disadvantaged families have less opportunity to participate in sport, affecting their health outcomes and risk of obesity. Investments in the stadium strategy could be redirected to higher rebates for sport and fitness activities for children from vulnerable families.

We urge the Committee to consider that other areas of spending and investment should be prioritised over the stadium strategy, as outlined in our PBS as a roadmap for a fair NSW.

If you require further information in relation to our response, please contact Elyse Cain, Advocacy Manager on 02 8960 7912 or elyse@ncoss.org.au.

Yours sincerely



Tracy McLeod Howe
CEO, NCOSS