

Media Release

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NSW Budget: welcome investment in children and families but housing gap continues

The NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) welcomes the 2018-19 NSW Budget investment in children and families but says the investment in social and affordable housing is not enough to ensure everyone has access to a safe, secure home in NSW.

NCOSS CEO, Tracy McLeod Howe, said she was particularly pleased to see a \$200 million investment in early childhood education, in line with the NCOSS Pre-Budget Submission, to ensure children have the best possible start in life.

“High quality ECEC can play a crucial role in early intervention and ensuring vulnerable children and families are connected and supported right from the start.

“We know this has positive flow-on impacts, can minimise the risk of children developing adverse outcomes later in life and help to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage,” said Ms McLeod Howe.

Despite this, Ms McLeod Howe said she was still concerned that too many children in NSW were missing out on these crucial learning years.

“With a 6.6% increase in overall investment in early childhood education and care this year, it’s hard to see how universal access to these crucial services will be achieved.”

In 2016, NSW was the only state at 84.9% not to meet the national target of 95% children enrolled in preschool for more than 600 hours in the year before full-time school.

NSW was also the worst performer for proportion of Indigenous children enrolled in preschool programs for more than 600 hours in the year before school at 80.9%.

“We must ensure that increased spending directed at early learning is reaching those that need it most. It would be a missed opportunity if it isn’t being directed to the areas where it can have the most impact.”

Ms McLeod Howe said it was reassuring to see an additional \$61.3 million investment into a whole of government homelessness strategy.

“This allocation demonstrates the Government is committed to working to ensure people do not fall between service gaps.

“But without additional funding for safe and securing housing, the Housing First response model can only partially be implemented. People need access to immediate and sustainable long-term accommodation in order to significantly reduce homelessness,” said Ms McLeod Howe.

“Overall, while there is positive investment in people in this year’s Budget, NSW needs a formal mechanism to assess the impact Budgets have on people’s wellbeing.

“NCOSS welcomes innovative thinking in this area and supports the ideas behind the Wellbeing Indicators Bill from the NSW Greens,” said Ms McLeod Howe.

Media contact: Laura Maclean, 0412 867 658