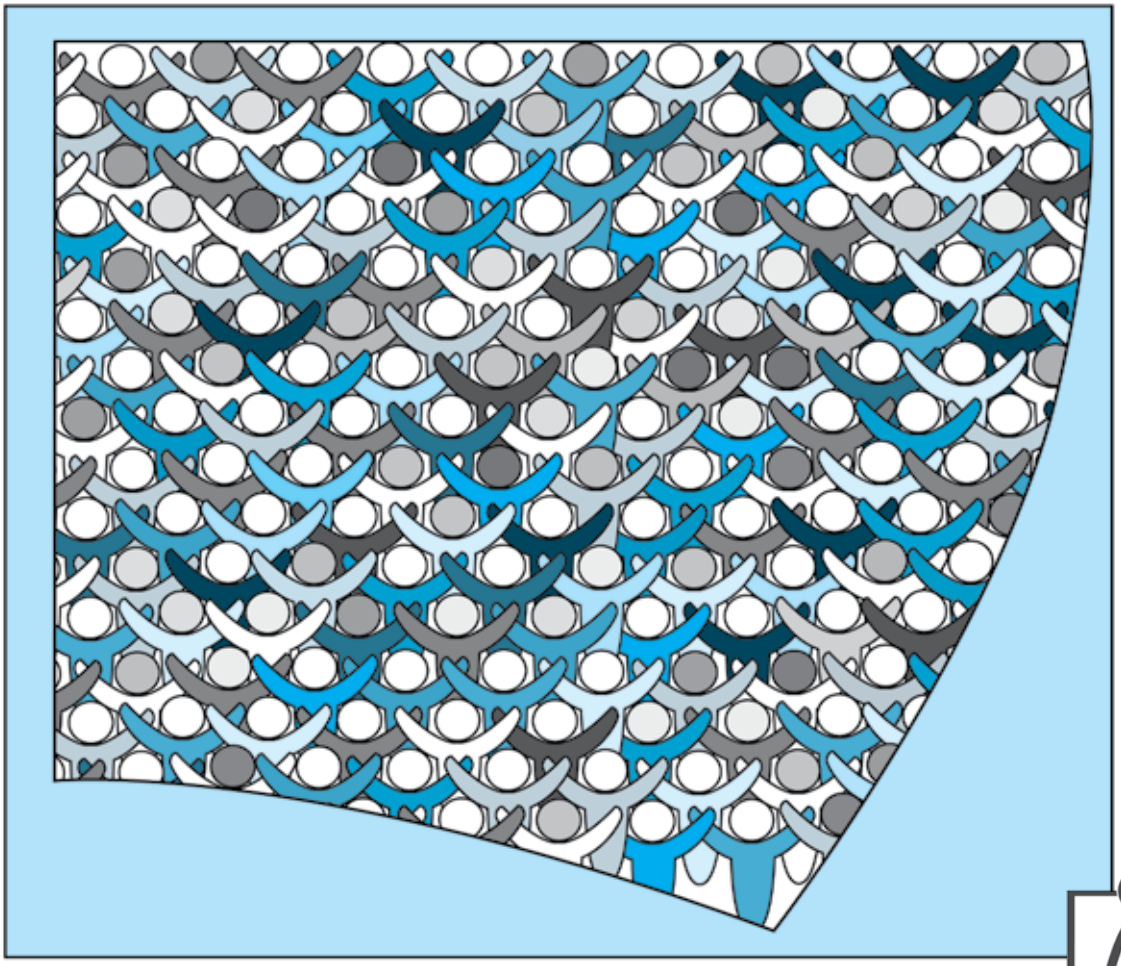
A Community Services Stimulus Package

Social and economic priorities for a fair and sustainable community: 2010-2011 State Budget



Submission to the New South Wales Government by the Council of Social Service of New South Wales

NCOSS

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Social and economic priorities
for a fair and sustainable community:
2010-2011 State Budget

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NCOSS

The Council of Social Service of New South Wales (NCOSS) is the peak body for the social and community services sector in New South Wales. NCOSS works with its members on behalf of disadvantaged people and communities towards achieving social justice in New South Wales.

NCOSS was established in 1935 to promote cooperation in the provision of community services and influence social legislation. Today our constituents are:

- our members
- other peak community service agencies in NSW
- service providers
- other agencies working in the social policy and social services field
- individual members interested in social policy and social service issues
- disadvantaged and low income people and communities in NSW.

NCOSS provides an independent voice on welfare policy issues and social and economic reforms and is the major co-ordinator for non-government social and community services in NSW.

We act as a channel for consultation with government and between parts of the non-government sector with common interests and diverse functions.

NCOSS is a membership organisation. Through current membership forums, NCOSS represents more than 7,000 NSW social and community services and over 100,000 consumers and individuals. Members range from the smallest community services to the largest major welfare agencies, state and regional level peak councils, churches, hospitals, local government and consumer groups.

NCOSS can be contacted at:
66 Albion Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
tel (02) 9211 2599, fax (02) 9281 1968
email: info@ncoss.org.au
website: www.ncoss.org.au

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Introduction

The 2008-09 year was one of significant change. The impact of the global economic situation saw both the Commonwealth and State Governments make significant commitments designed to stimulate the economy and to keep people in employment. Added to this, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) decisions reflected in National Partnership Agreements saw substantial financial resources directed at areas NCOSS has long had a strong interest in.

In particular, funding for social housing, to address homelessness, for health and in early childhood will make a substantial difference for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people and communities and begins to address the lack of investment in these areas over the last decade. The State Government has also made commitments for significant resources to implement the recommendations of the Wood and Garling Inquiries. These commitments are contained within the *Keep Them Safe Action Plan* (on child protection) and the *Caring Together* plan (on the Health system).

Taken together these various announcements and agreements have delivered on some recommendations made in previous NCOSS Pre-Budget Submissions (PBS). This is very welcome.

However, while Government has its clear priorities as a result of these agreements and commitments, there are many other issues that need attention. As a peak advocacy body we need to advocate both for the "popular" front of mind issues but also for those that are often overlooked to ensure that vulnerable people, whatever their vulnerability, are supported.

The NCOSS PBS reflects our views about where the State Government needs to invest to make a real difference at this time. The PBS seeks to balance the many pressing priorities in the community with the fact that there are limited resources available. The recommendations, therefore, represent where we believe Government can get the best return for their investment in the current environment and to ensure the best possible outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged people and communities.

The NCOSS PBS is a testament to the collective wisdom and experience of those working within the community services sector. It is also a reflection of the skill and expertise of the NCOSS staff who consult, research and develop the arguments to support each recommendation. It is the product of many hours of hard work and I thank everyone for their contributions.

The work of the PBS does not, of course, end with its publication. We must advocate for each of the recommendations at every opportunity. This effort is required if we are to fulfil our vision for a fair, just and sustainable society.

Alison Peters
NCOSS Director
October 2009

NCOSS priorities for Government expenditure

Department of Health

Recommendation 1: Reproductive Health

State Plan Priorities: S1, F3

Results
An improvement to women's access to information, support and appropriate counselling around pregnancy options, with a focus on increasing access to services for young women, women living in rural and remote areas, and women who experience socio-economic disadvantage.

Evidence/Rationale
The National Health and Medical Research Council[1] and other researchers[2] have recommended that counselling for pregnancy options (motherhood, adoption and termination) is available for all women who are seeking it in decision making, and where relevant post-abortion.

Since 2001 several factors have combined to restrict access to pregnancy termination services in NSW. These changes have included a decrease in the number of bulk-billing abortion providers, which in turn has led to an increase in the cost of termination of pregnancy. The overall outcome has been an increase in the up-front costs for a termination and an increase in the overall out-of-pocket expense of up to $130 in out of pocket expenses.

In addition to this, since the mid-90s the proportion of pregnancy terminations conducted in NSW public hospitals has almost halved. In 2003-04, 4.8% of terminations were carried out in New South Wales public hospitals, compared to 96% of terminations in South Australia.[3] There has been some suggestion that the number of NSW public hospitals providing terminations is as little as three. This results in significantly fewer options for low-income women seeking to terminate a pregnancy.

Increasing upfront costs and difficulties obtaining a termination from public hospitals has a disproportionate affect on women who are socio-economically disadvantaged, particularly young women and women in rural and regional areas who often face additional transport costs to access termination services. It has also been recommended that local information about services for pregnancy termination be improved.[4]

Action
NSW Health to fund a state-wide Pregnancy Options Counselling and Support Service to provide counselling, advocacy and brokerage, and to develop and maintain a state-wide referral database and network of health care providers working in the field.

Cost: **$400,995 recurrent**

Recommendation 2: Provision of Appliances for Disabled People (PADP)

State Plan Priorities: F2

Results

People with disability are supplied in a timely manner with aids, appliances and other assistive technologies which support them to live more independently in the community and which facilitate their participation in all aspects of society.

Evidence/Rationale

The PADP program provides equipment, aids and appliances to people with a life-long or long term disability in order to support them to live independently in the community.

PADP is an integral part of the network of services that allows individuals to leave hospital under earlier discharge strategies and to live in the community rather than inappropriately or prematurely in residential facilities. The timely provision of appropriate equipment helps people to avoid future hospital admission (e.g. walking frames that prevent falls), enables community care services to provide assistance, and reduces avoidable demand on community care services by supporting people in the tasks of daily living.

The administration and resourcing of PADP has recently been the subject of review and reform. A Parliamentary Inquiry reported in January 2009 and delivered 21 recommendations. NCOSS belongs to the PADP Community Alliance which has responded to the Inquiry Report with a Position Statement[5] which, while agreeing in principle with the Inquiry findings, seeks to emphasise the following critical recommendations from the Inquiry Report:

- Increase in base funding;
- PADP as an entitlement program;
- Improved performance indicators;
- Abolish the co-payment;
- Data on current, unmet and future demand;
- Access for people from culturally different backgrounds; and
- Coordination and integration of NSW Health and the Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care.

The 2006 Pricewaterhouse Coopers Report[6] on PADP found that demand for PADP would continue to grow with estimated increases in population prevalence of disability.

Whilst there has been some additional investment in PADP, including $5m recurrent in 2009-10, there has been no sustained growth funding for the program, leaving issues such as unmet and increasing demand, long waiting lists and under-resourcing largely unresolved.

Many people with disability experience substantially higher costs of living in comparison to other members of the community.[7] Many people with disability on low incomes already devote a large proportion of their weekly income to meet the costs of having a disability.[8] These higher costs generate significant hardship for low and middle income households.

Given that the vast majority of people with disability are likely to come from a low income household, and that the high costs of disability will adversely impact on a range of households, NCOSS believes that PADP should be an entitlement for all people with disability, and that exclusions should only apply to very high income earners. Copayments for the program should be removed on the grounds that they are prohibitive and inflict unnecessary financial hardship.

Action

That additional core funding for PADP is provided at an amount that ensures ongoing capacity for the provision of equipment, aids and appliances to people with a life-long or long-term disability.

Cost: An additional $24.4m in 2010-11, rising to a total recurrent budget of $100m in 2014-15[9] to meet eligible population forecasts

Recommendation 3: Smoking Cessation Support Program

State Plan Priorities: S3

Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in Australia and is responsible for 7.8% of the total burden of disease in this country.[10]

Whilst smoking rates across the community have declined in the last decade, smoking rates for low income and disadvantaged population groups have remained higher than those among more socio-economically advantaged groups. In NSW amongst males, 15.4% of the least disadvantaged quintile smoke compared to 22.6% of the most disadvantaged. Among females the gap is even greater, with only 10.2% of the least disadvantaged smoking compared to 26% of women in the most disadvantaged quintile.[11] Smoking rates are even higher amongst groups who experience more severe disadvantage or are otherwise vulnerable:

- Around 50% of Aboriginal people smoke.[12] 51% of Aboriginal women report smoking during pregnancy.[13]

- Smoking rates among people with mental illness vary with the condition. Adults with any mental health or behaviour problem reported had a smoking prevalence of 32%.[14] Smoking rates of 73% (males) and 56% (females) have been found among people with psychotic illness in Australia.[15]
- 46% of single parents smoke with higher rates for low-income single parents.[16]
- Smoking rates of 65% have been recorded among vulnerable young people.[17]
- People in drug treatment have smoking rates between 74% - 100%.

Despite these high smoking rates many people from socio-economically disadvantaged groups express a desire to quit smoking.[18,19,20] However community organisations report that the cost of quit smoking medications such as Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is cited by clients as a major barrier to quitting smoking.[21] This is a significant problem for smoking cessation efforts among disadvantaged groups, as NRT almost doubles the chances of a quit attempt being successful.[22] A combination of NRT and supportive cessation counselling has been shown to be even more effective.

NCOSS believes that in order to implement effective smoking interventions in disadvantaged groups interventions need to be tailored to particular needs and circumstances. As such, with appropriate support and training NGOs are well-placed to deliver effective smoking interventions to low-income and disadvantaged groups given that they have established support relationships, frequent contact and already assist their clients across a range of life issues.

Action

- The NSW Government work with its Federal counterparts to establish a sustainable system for the delivery of affordable nicotine replacement therapy to low income and disadvantaged groups in NSW. All persons eligible for a Commonwealth Health Care Card should be able to access free or low cost NRT. Funding for this measure can be provided by an increase in commonwealth excise on tobacco products.
- The NSW Government provide funding for an additional, full-time smoking cessation trainer to work with staff of government and non-government services who primarily provide services to low income and disadvantaged people.

Cost: **$150,00 recurrent**

"...the cost of quit smoking medications such as Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is cited by clients as a major barrier to quitting smoking."

■ Recommendation 4: Public Dental Services

State Plan Priorities: S1, S2, F4, F5

Result

Improved oral health amongst socio-economically disadvantaged groups and increased preventive treatment.

Evidence/Rationale

NSW has the lowest per capita expenditure on public dental services of all states and territories, with approximately 160,000 people currently on public dental waiting lists in NSW.[23] Public dental patients suffer from poorer oral health,[24] are less likely to receive preventive services and experience higher levels of tooth loss,[25] the majority of which is preventable.

In 2006 the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues reported on dental services, finding that socio-economically disadvantaged groups bear the brunt of underfunded public dental services:

The committee notes the level of treatment that the public system is able to provide to users contrasts with the wide range of general and elective treatments provided to people who can afford to pay for services provided by private practitioners. The reduced treatment available in public dental services is affecting the health of public dental patients, who can suffer in a range of ways from social embarrassment up to serious medical conditions and, in extreme cases, the death of patients who do not receive adequate and timely treatment.[26]

The report also highlighted the particular shortages in the public dental workforce, finding that this led to reduced access to dental services, growing waiting lists, increased waiting time and a reduction in the provision of preventive care.

Recent data reinforces the argument that the oral health workforce in NSW, particularly the

public health workforce, requires significant enhancement:

- Only 13% of dentists in NSW work in the public sector.[27]
- The number of dentists practicing as specialists in NSW is 5.2 per 100,000 population, the third lowest rate of all states and territories.[28]
- NSW has the second lowest rate of dental hygienists of all states and territories, at 2.2 per 100,000 population.[29]
- NSW has the lowest number of dental therapists per 100,000 population, at 3.9. This well below the national average of 7.5.[30]
- The number of dental prosthetists has remained relatively stable at 4.6 per 100,000 population, however 89% of dental prosthetists work in the private sector.[31]

Whilst the Commonwealth Government has committed funding to the States and Territories through the Commonwealth Dental Health Program (CDHP) and the Medicare Teen Dental Plan (MTDP), this funding alone will not resolve the significant funding and workforce challenges facing public dental services in NSW, and may in fact exacerbate demand both in the short term through the MTDP and following the expiry of the CDHP.

Actions

- Enhancement to core funding for public dental services to meet the NSW Legislative Council's recommendation that public dental funding be increased to be comparable to other states.
- Funding for a five-year strategy for comprehensive oral health workforce initiatives.

Cost: $198.51m in 2010-11, increasing to $258.19m plus indexation in 2013-14

■ Recommendation 5: Health NGOs

State Plan Priorities: S1, S2, S3, F1, F3, F4, F5

Result

Increased viability and sustainability of the Health Non-Government Organisation (NGO) sector, leading to the enhanced health and well being of the community, especially for those who are the most disadvantaged.

Evidence/Rationale

NGO Health services are a vital component of mainstream health services, in many cases providing core services that have not historically been, or would not be, provided by the public sector. Many health NGOs specifically target marginalised groups in their community who do not use mainstream health services, or do not use them until they are seriously ill. Their flexible structures and client-focused ethic make them well suited to responding to the needs of these groups.

The NSW Health NGO program currently receives less than 0.9% of the NSW Health Budget.

The Health NGO Sector has a broad range of strengths that include the ability to provide a cost effective service. However, over the last five years there has been a significant increase in operation costs, with figures indicating that WorkCover costs alone rose by 142% from 2001-02 to 2004-05, while total insurance costs over the same period rose by 68%.[32] In addition to this, indexation levels have failed to provide for the true cost of increases in service delivery. In addition to the rise in rental and maintenance costs, NGOs have also reported increasing administrative burdens and Information Technology costs.

The cumulative effect of these funding shortfalls is significant. As such costs accumulate, the NGO sector's capacity to provide services to the community is reduced, with many services forced to decrease direct service delivery to cover increased costs.

Action

NSW Health increase funding to Health NGOs by 15% to meet increased core costs of service delivery.

Cost: $18.1m recurrent

■ Recommendation 6: Transport for Health

State Plan Priorities: S1, S2, F1, F3, F5

Results

- Significant improvements in health connectivity for rural, regional and remote communities, Aboriginal communities and people on low incomes.
- A reduction in the number of people missing health appointments due to transport problems.
- Improvement in survival rates and quality of life for people with potentially fatal or chronic illness by improving access to health care.
- Improved health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Evidence/Rationale

The Transport for Health program is aimed at supporting Area Health Services to be more strategic in identifying, consolidating and integrating a full range of transport services and resources to increase effectiveness and reduce duplication.[33] Furthermore it promotes the use of a mobility management approach to non-emergency transport by all Area

Health Services, through coordination between the appointments system and transport service providers, the encouragement of closer cooperation and the development of partnerships with external service providers such as the community transport industry.

There is also funding available specifically targeting health related transport through the Transport for Health Program. Eligibility for support under this program is wider than for the Home and Community Care Program (HACC) and it is provided on the basis of a patient's inability to reasonably gain access to local health services by either public or private transport. Passengers whose trips are subsidised by Transport for Health in rural areas can be taken to regional and Sydney-based health facilities as well as local facilities. As with the HACC program, Transport for Health is based on eligibility rather than entitlement.

In rural and regional areas there are many barriers to accessing transport, which affect people's ability to seek treatment when needed. For example regionalisation of services has meant that many people who do not own a motor vehicle are likely to face significant difficulties travelling to access health services. In some areas this can mean a trip of 200 – 300kms just to get to the appointment. The problem can be even greater in Aboriginal communities where it is not uncommon for people to walk or hitchhike long distances in order to attend medical appointments.

Although transport to health services is clearly a problem in rural and regional NSW, it can also be a problem in metropolitan areas. For example, consolidation of health services has increased the distance required for specialised treatment i.e. Oncology and Dialysis treatment. Poor planning for public transport to health destinations, inaccessible transport services and limited resources for community transport all create barriers to accessing health services. For example, in one Area Health Service a hydrotherapy pool used for rehabilitation was relocated from a hospital with good public transport to one where there was one bus per hour and a 1km walk to the pool. Many low-income patients resort to unaffordable forms of transport, such as taxis, in order to get to important health appointments.

Another aspect of the Transport for Health Program is the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS). This program is designed to assist with access to specialist medical treatment and oral surgical care, for people living in isolated and rural communities. It provides a partial reimbursement of actual accommodation and travel costs. To be eligible people need to live more than 100km (one way) from where specialist medical treatment that they need is provided.

"Many low-income patients resort to unaffordable forms of transport, such as taxis, in order to get to important health appointments."

There are a number of problems relating to IPTAAS, including the:

- High upfront costs of the scheme;
- $40 co-contribution that is deducted from the total benefits payable for each journey (excluding pensioners and health care card holders);
- Low levels of reimbursement for accommodation costs ($46 per night for a double and $33 per night for a single) and fuel (15c per km);
- Lack of ability to elect a carer; and
- Intensive paperwork required for each claim.

In addition IPTAAS reimbursement can take up to three months. These barriers and complex paperwork means that many low income and Aboriginal people will not use the scheme.

Despite ongoing reforms of the health system in NSW, there has been little attention paid to the transport needs of patients. Despite increasing demand for access to health appointments reported by community transport providers there has been little increase in funding to health related transport services. In light of increasing fuel costs and increasing demand NSW Health needs to significantly increase funding to the Health Transport program for both transport to health and IPTAAS.

Actions

Transport for Health

- Increase NSW Health funding for non-emergency transport services to $10.65m per annum plus CPI (as per the *No Transport No Treatment Report* released in December 2007).
- Improve monitoring and evaluation of the Transport for Health Program, especially of the number of people who are refused a service (to determine unmet need).
- Ensure that health planning includes provision of patient accommodation and transit lounges at major health facilities, access to parking for patients and their escorts and adequate discharge planning procedures to ensure patients have transport home from hospital.

- Ensure that appropriate transport services are available for patients who require specialist equipment and support, including cancer patients.
- Create health transport options for Aboriginal people by providing dedicated and flexible services to Aboriginal communities, including increasing the network of Aboriginal transport coordinators.

IPTAAS

- Reform administration of IPTAAS in NSW to minimise paperwork and allow administration by local services.
- Reform payment processes through IPTAAS so that travel and accommodation expenses can be estimated and paid in advance or bulk-billed.
- Ensure that travel and accommodation expenses for IPTAAS are reimbursed to the equivalent of the public service rate. These reimbursements should be adjusted by CPI each year and take account of different accommodation costs associated with staying in large rural and metropolitan centres.
- Broaden IPTAAS to cover generalist medical appointments, not just specialists, if people live in isolated areas and especially for Aboriginal communities.
- Ensure that people undergoing block or repeated treatments such as radiotherapy need only pay the personal contribution once per treatment cycle.

Cost: **$10.65m recurrent from 2010-11 for Health Related Transport**

NCOSS is unable to cost the IPTAAS recommendations without access to relevant NSW health expenditure and usage data.

Department of Human Services

Cross Agency Recommendation: Housing NSW and Community Services Recommendation 7: Improving services for people who are homeless

State Plan Priorities: Proposed new Priority Agenda - Strengthening Communities: Reduce the number of people in NSW who experience homelessness.[34]

Results

- More people in housing crisis in NSW are better supported when facing homelessness, and fewer people are at risk of homelessness.
- The development of a more integrated homelessness service system for NSW, including:
  - Developing new service models,
  - Filling identified gaps, and
  - Placing existing crisis accommodation services on a more sustainable footing.

Evidence/Rationale

In last year's Pre-Budget Submission (PBS),[35] NCOSS put forward two linked proposals to improve services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness:

- Develop a comprehensive and integrated NSW Homelessness Strategy to ensure a better coordinated response to homelessness,[36] and
- Establish a fund to develop new service models, fill identified gaps and place existing services on a more sustainable footing, with funding of $30m in 2009-10.

These recommendations were put forward in response to the national evaluation of SAAP IV,[37] the Auditor General's report on the NSW Partnership Against Homelessness,[38] the National Youth Commission's report on youth homelessness[39] and the Federal Government's Green Paper.[40]

Subsequent to the release of that PBS, the Federal Government released its ambitious White Paper[41] and the Federal, State and Territory Governments signed a number of COAG agreements to implement the White Paper agenda, including the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan (NBESP).

In August 2009 the NSW Government delivered on the first element of our campaign with the release of its *Homelessness Action Plan* for 2009-14.[42] The NSW Homelessness Community Alliance, convened by NCOSS, was consulted about the development of this Plan, which outlines a range of strategies and actions that seek to ensure that people never become homeless, provide effective assistance to people who are homeless and ensure that people who have been homeless do not become homeless again.

In relation to the second element of our campaign, the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness provides additional funding for NSW of $283m over five years. This includes additional funding of $50.9m in 2009-10 and $67m in 2010-11.[43]

Under the National Partnership Agreement the State Government is required to submit a NSW Implementation Plan to the Federal Minister for Housing for approval. An initial Implementation Plan focusing on 2009-10 actions has been approved

by the Commonwealth but not publicly released. Funding allocations for 2010-11 and later years will not be finalised until the NSW Implementation Plan is updated next year.

In the meantime NCOSS and the other peaks involved in the NSW Homelessness Community Alliance will continue to engage with the relevant NSW Government agencies to ensure that the welcome additional investment available under the National Partnership Agreement is used most effectively to implement the reform agendas outlined in both the Commonwealth White Paper and the NSW Homelessness Action Plan.

■ Cross Agency Recommendation: Community Services and Ageing, Disability and Home Care Recommendation 8: Increased Management Support and Research Capacity

State Plan Priorities: S8, F4

Results

- Enhanced access to best practice management and governance advice, support and resourcing to the non-government sector.
- Improved management and governance capacity of Boards of Management of funded services.
- Increased NGO access to new research and improved capacity to implement preventive, evidence based practice at the service level.
- Real capacity for cross-sectorial research/practitioner partnerships that improve outcomes for disadvantaged people through proven service interventions.

Evidence/Rationale

The NCOSS Management Support Unit (MSU) has been funded (2.5 days per week) by NSW Health since 2000. This state-wide service proactively supports and resources the development of a high quality and effective community sector through a range of industry development services. It also provides a 'clearing house' function through the provision of up to date information, advice and resources on best practice management and governance.

As a part time service with a state wide brief, the MSU seeks to maximise the services it can provide to members and the sector by contract partnerships. However the demand for this service far outstrips its current capacity.

There has been a substantial increase in demand on the MSU from NGOs funded by a range of human service agencies, including the Departments of Community Services and Ageing, Disability and Home Care. The service requires additional funding to meet the demand and provide a full-time service.

"A strong research evidence base is essential to inform more effective and preventative service delivery practice and improve outcomes for disadvantaged people and communities."

A strong research evidence base is essential to inform more effective and preventative service delivery practice and improve outcomes for disadvantaged people and communities. The sector's ability to utilise and integrate new research is however severely limited by the lack of dedicated research capacity and formal links with relevant academics and research institutes. A specialist research position, based within the NCOSS Sector Development Unit would:

- Undertake research to inform improved practice.
- Act as facilitator or 'knowledge broker' between the community sector and researchers/research institutes using partnership models.
- Translate findings and tested evidence based learnings into practical 'sector friendly' resources to enhance service delivery capacity.

NCOSS acknowledges the recent decision by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care to provide funding for these services, on a non-recurrent basis, for the next 12 months. We continue to seek funding for these vital capacity building resources, on a recurrent basis, from the Departments of Community Services and Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

Actions

Provide funding over a three year period to:

- Expand the NCOSS Management Support Unit from a part-time to a full-time service.
- Employ a full time researcher.

Cost: **2010-11 - $238,167**
(Over 3 years- $714,500)

Department of Human Services

Ageing, Disability and Home Care

Recommendation 9: Home and Community Care

State Plan Priorities: F1, F4

Results

- The Home and Community Care Program (HACC) in NSW has improved capacity meet the home support needs of frail older people, people with disability and their carers within reasonable timeframes and before crisis occurs.
- Equitable delivery of community care and disability services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Service providers are confident of the ongoing viability of their service provision in real terms.
- New services are developed to meet greater and evolving needs and to deliver on more flexible support responses.
- HACC is included in the NSW State Plan outcomes by explicitly aligning with the *Towards 2030: Planning for our Changing Population* strategic outcome of "Providing quality care and support".

Evidence/Rationale

Community care services are a critical support mechanism for people wanting to remain at home in the community, especially for those requiring more support than family and friends can provide.

In June 2009, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reported: "The ageing of the NSW population is projected to continue in the future. Increasing our understanding about the extent of population ageing allows NSW to plan and prepare for the future needs of an older population."[44] The ABS projects that from 2006 to 2036, the proportion of the population aged 65+ years will rise from 14% in 2006 to 21% in 2036. During that time, the proportion of adults aged between 15 and 64 years, of working age, will decline from a ratio of 5 to 1 in 2006 to less than 3 to 1 in 2036.

Similarly the proportions of people with disability are projected to escalate in coming years.

National comparisons show that fewer eligible people are receiving HACC services in NSW and those who do access HACC generally receive less service. The Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2009 showed that NSW has one of the lowest proportions of HACC services received per thousand people in the HACC population and remains significantly lower than the national average and Victoria, even when recalculated for a perfect data return rate. The Productivity Commission Report further indicates that NSW receives the lowest Australian Government expenditure per person aged 70+ years and Aboriginal people aged 50+ years in the HACC program, as well as in the National Respite for Carers Program and the Day Therapy Centres Program.

The Closing the Gap strategies are designed to improve the trailing lifespans of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare states that the incidence of disability in the Aboriginal community is 2.4 times greater than in the general community. Accordingly, the NSW Aboriginal Community Care Gathering Committee strongly advocates for more equitable use of HACC and related services by the Aboriginal community. The NSW Gathering Committee comprises nominated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and community members involved in HACC and related service provision.

In 2009-10 the HACC program received approximately 7.4% growth in funding. Despite this very welcome enhancement, there are a number of critical priorities for and pressures on the NSW HACC system and providers including:

- Accelerated strategies towards equity for Aboriginal HACC clients on a population and needs basis supported by public reporting, especially in the areas of:
  - innovative Aboriginal transport projects to improve the delivery of transport to Aboriginal people;
  - strategies supporting the development of Aboriginal non-government organisations to improve the provision of community care (and disability) services by and for Aboriginal people;
  - an Aboriginal workforce plan for community care (and disability) services.
- Escalating infrastructure costs, due to a number of factors including new costs of criminal records checks, future purchase of quality assessments, the impact of rising petrol prices, climate change for organisations and clients.
- Capacity building in rural and remote services.
- *Transport:* Recognising that most HACC services require a transport component and that transport is an essential enabling service to access other necessary services and supports. This is an essential social inclusion strategy.

- *Home modifications:* For an older person or person with disability, access to timely well advised modifications can make the difference between staying at home or unnecessarily entering permanent care.
- *Domestic Assistance and Personal Care:* these services have experienced accelerating demand in recent years, often leading to unreasonable wait lists. The issue of domestic squalor has become prominent in recent years.
- Investment in workforce development and training to achieve a growing, stable and qualified workforce. This also involves volunteer development, in light of escalating expectations upon volunteers, competition for volunteer recruitment and the ageing of HACC volunteers themselves.
- Provision of advocacy to assist in navigating the complex community care system, particularly for Aboriginal clients and families and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Specific support to address the under-use of HACC services by people of culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including strategies to reach larger emerging communities; and improved access to translations and interpreting services.
- The emerging group of people with disability who are growing older and reaching retirement stage. This can happen at a chronologically earlier age than in the general population but could require tailored support responses. The issue of what jurisdiction will provide the supports and in what forms must be urgently negotiated.
- Promoting HACC services throughout the general community.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has been reviewing jurisdictional roles and responsibilities. The HACC sector has been awaiting the COAG decision about the future of the HACC Program; whether HACC will remain a joint Commonwealth/ State Agreement or be split into component parts separately assigned to Commonwealth (ageing) and State (disability) governments. NCOSS has been assured by the Federal Minister Justine Elliott that regardless of the COAG decision, there would be no major changes to HACC in NSW before the end of the current Triennial Agreement in June 2011. The decision on the future of HACC has been delayed several times and is now expected with the Hospitals Reform outcomes at the end of 2009. Consequently, DADHC should be wary of postponing planned improvements to the HACC program which apply to other DADHC funded service provision.

NCOSS supports the two year acquisition initiative for funding distribution in 2009. However, if this involves an increased proportion of direct allocations just to get the job done, NCOSS is very concerned that fairness and transparency in DADHC funding processes will be lost. Successful funding processes depend on effective local and regional planning, and this is more important when two years of Expressions of Interest are to be processed in one year. Similarly, the resource allocation formula used to distribute proportional funding allocations across NSW must recognise the additional pressures on service delivery to isolated areas.

"...most HACC services require a transport component... transport is an essential enabling service to access other necessary services and supports."

Actions

The NSW Government increases its financial contribution to the HACC Program by 20% regardless of the Australian Government contribution.

Cost: $48m recurrent

■ Recommendation 10: Seniors Card

State Plan Priorities: R4, F1

Results

- Seniors Card is available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from 45 years of age.
- The removal of current inequity in the Seniors Card concession program.
- Significant Reduction in social disadvantage by improving transport affordability for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Evidence/Rationale

The NSW Government currently provides a Seniors Card to people aged over 60 years who work less than 20 hours a week. This entitles cardholders to a range of discounts for government and private business services. Significantly, the Seniors Card enables beneficiaries to take advantage of concession fares and Pensioner Excursion Tickets on some transport services.

Due to the reduced life expectancy of Aboriginal people, more than 17 years lower than the rest of the population, many Aboriginal people will never have access to Seniors Card benefits. Lowering the

eligibility age for Aboriginal people to 45 years would improve access to affordable services that are currently available to other older people in NSW.

Expanding the eligibility for the Seniors Card would prove useful given reforms in the bus services area. The NSW Government has expanded bus concessions and the Pensioner Excursion Ticket to all parts of metropolitan Sydney and some country areas. Lowering the eligible age for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would allow them to take advantage of these concessions and help address some of the transport disadvantage faced by Aboriginal people.

Actions

Expand eligibility for the Seniors Card to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 45 years and older.

Cost

NCOSS is unable to adequately determine the costs for this proposal. Approximate impacts for the NSW Government can be determined by reference to forward estimates allocations for concession and Pensioner Excursion Ticket (PET) expansion in the bus services area.

■ Recommendation 11: Accommodation options for people with disability

State Plan Priorities: R4, F2

Results

- Renewed commitment to devolution of all people with disability out of residential centres or disability institutions into supported community living situations which conform in all respects to the NSW Disability Services Act.
- Rapid acceleration of provision of supported living situations for people with disability, comprising access to housing and support opportunities which conform to current state legislation and reflect living situations of other adults in the general population.

Evidence/Rationale

The NSW Stronger Together Disability Plan is a ten year plan containing five years of funding allocations. Currently in its fourth year of operation, Stronger Together has met its planned spending targets, including a funding increase of $50.6m in 2009-10. Stronger Together provides a range of supports to people with disability, but NCOSS argues that the planned provision of supported accommodation is the slowest component of the Stronger Together Plan and must be immediately accelerated.

By mid-2011, Stronger Together will have provided 990 new supported accommodation places in NSW, comprising 650 places for people connected with Departments of Community Services and Corrective Services and 340 places for people now living in the community ie unmet need. The now integrated Disability Assistance Package from the Commonwealth will provide approximately 580 extra supported accommodation places by 2012. Between 2006 and mid-2011, the number of Attendant Care places will increase by 320 under Stronger Together.

In its June 2007 Report on Current and Future Demand for Specialist Disability Services, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) provided estimates of unmet need for the year 2005 covering a range of disability supports including accommodation and respite services. Using these estimates, in the year 2005 NSW had a critical unmet need for accommodation and respite services of just under 8,000 places. NCOSS notes that the AIHW advised this was probably a conservative estimate, with demand more likely to be 10,400 places in NSW in the year 2005.

This NSW unmet need for more than 8,000 new places in the year 2005 is alarming given that planned spending on supported accommodation by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments could provide only 1,933 new places by the year 2012.

The AIHW further acknowledges that these estimates are likely to be compounded by other pressures that will intensify unmet need, such as projected increases in the size of the population of people with severe or profound disability, increased levels of need for assistance due to the ageing of the person with disability and their carer, reduced access to housing options, people with disability increasingly choosing community living and the falling ratio of carers to people with disability.

At current and planned spending levels, if there is no immediate acceleration in the provision of supported accommodation, NSW will remain in disability supported accommodation crisis in 2012.

The NSW Ombudsman[45] defines residential centres in NSW as congregate care accommodating seven or more people with disability on one site, with a large residential centre (or disability institution) accommodating more than 20 people on one site. The largest centre in NSW houses over 400 people. At present, around 1,700 people with disability are living in residential centres in NSW with around 70% of these in large residential centres. NCOSS does not support any forms of disability accommodation that do not reflect that available to other adults in the community and calls for a closure

of disability residential centres, instead supporting people in a range of small community based living opportunities.

NCOSS is concerned that plans for redevelopment of large centres will result in simply smaller residential centres rather than dispersed supported living in the community. There is no obvious recurring funding allocation under the Stronger Together Disability Plan for the continuing transfer of people with disability out of congregate care. In order to facilitate this, NCOSS supports and encourages the development of a devolution plan that complies with the NSW Disability Services Act to enable improved living conditions and opportunities for some of the most vulnerable people in NSW.

There is ample available and current evidence that more individualised, consumer-directed and community based living delivers significantly better outcomes for very vulnerable people in our community. NCOSS strongly urges DADHC to ensure that all its new supported accommodation places are provided in small dispersed community based styles and models and that self-directed supports are an integrated feature of this service provision.

There has been demonstrably slow progress in the *Younger People in Residential Aged Care Facilities Program*, also known as the Younger People in Nursing Homes Program, which aims to provide more appropriate supported accommodation for people aged under 50 years and improved supports to those remaining in nursing homes. With the serious undersupply of supported accommodation for people with disability, NCOSS is concerned that there should be no new admissions to residential aged care facilities of people aged under 50 years, but this will require mandatory policy to be introduced. Equally, the NSW Government should work with the Commonwealth to provide additional resources to support people with very high support needs in more appropriate community based living situations.

Similarly, people with disability living in boarding houses, or Licensed Residential Centres, require more appropriate supported accommodation and significantly improved protective legislation. NCOSS believes there are over 700 people with disability currently living in licensed boarding houses in NSW and fears there may be many more in boarding houses that remain unlicensed and consequently un-monitored.

There have been no new recurrent budget allocations to progress devolution in recent years and NCOSS looks forward to a renewed commitment with firm schedules towards closure of residential centres and institutions as an urgent priority.

"NCOSS strongly urges DADHC to ensure that all its new supported accommodation places are provided in small dispersed community based styles and models..."

Actions

- That the NSW Government increases planned 2010-11 Stronger Together growth allocations to supported living to begin to address escalating unmet need of people and families with disability. This comprises an increase of an additional 60 Attendant Care Places (costing $4.8m) plus an additional 60 supported accommodation unmet need places (costing $7.7m) at a total cost of $12.5m recurrent.
- That the NSW Government provides an immediate additional allocation to accelerate the devolution of people with disability from institutions using a fully funded and timetabled implementation plan. Increased investment in 2010-11 will be $12.5m.

Cost: $25m recurrent

■ Recommendation 12: Self-Directed Support for people with disability

State Plan Priorities: R4, F2, F4

Results

- People with disability and families have control in addressing their particular individual needs.
- The disability service system and providers can create long-demanded flexibility necessary to meet individual needs through specific planning.
- An end to perceived duplication or over-servicing in disability services.

Evidence/Rationale

Previously known as individualised packages, the funding method where the person (with or without carers/family) directly receives the funding allocation is now more correctly termed self-directed support.

This acknowledges a critical distinction. Self-Directed Support funding goes directly to a named person with disability who (with or without their family/carers) makes decisions about how the money will best support them. Individualised packages,

while separately contracted and monitored, may be allocated to a service provider who allocates the packages according to demand, and who may decide what supports the client needs and then provides them. Self-Directed Support provides a new approach in NSW to sustaining people with disability, which can engage with but does not rely on established service models or systems.

The NSW Stronger Together Disability Plan includes a commitment to explore Self-Directed Support and individualised packages. NCOSS acknowledges that DADHC has commenced action research in this area alongside four pilot programs: *"My Plan My Choice Early Start"* in Met South Region, *"Extended Family Support"* across NSW, 90 self-managed packages in the new *"Active Ageing"* and *"Life Choices"* programs, *"My Plan My Choice Older Carers"* in the Northern Region. These are in addition to the self-managed stream of the Community Participation Program.

Self-Directed Support has been successfully implemented in several other Australian states and overseas for a number of years. The person with disability and their family can purchase necessary supports customised to their specific needs when required from any appropriate source. This approach to supporting people with disability is tailored to the needs of the named individual and does not revolve around service providers or the service system. Disability service providers, however, can be integral to the support needs of the individual.

The effective implementation of Self-Directed Support involves three important components:

1. A funding package adequate to the level of support needed by the person;
2. *Technical expertise.* A qualified disability advisor, a technical expert responsible to the person with disability, is available if needed to assist in developing the tailored package of supports and designing staff activities etc;
3. *Financial intermediary.* This is a person or organisation that, if required, manages the mandatory infrastructure requirements of the funding (i.e. finances, legal obligations, contracting, etc.)

From the viewpoint of the person with disability, Self-Directed Support offers the power to engage the type and level of support they need rather than trying to fit into an established sometimes unresponsive service system. This will also enable the flexibility to address different needs at different life stages as well as cultural issues, especially useful to Aboriginal people with disability and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The person's specific supports can better engage their strengths, personal networks and resources. NCOSS believes this to be a more effective and efficient way of providing support, instead of fitting often square pegs into round holes in a service system experiencing overwhelming demand.

Actions

That the NSW Government provides at least 300 Self-Directed Support packages, on a sliding scale according to needs, to people with disability and their families.

Cost: $19.5m recurrent

■ Recommendation 13: Parity for the Post School Options Program

State Plan Priorities: F2

Results

- Equitable quality and adequacy of day programs for adults with disability in the Post School Options Program.
- Appropriate and adequate supports for adults with disability for skills development, ongoing learning and community involvement.

Evidence/Rationale

The NSW Government is working towards improved participation of people with disability in employment and in the local community. Students with disability who left school after 1999 and who have not directly entered employment or a Commonwealth employment program, have been channelled into either the Transition to Work or the Community Participation (CP) programs. The provision of accessible and affordable transport would improve the independence of people attending these programs.

There are, however, around 1,400 people with disability in the Post School Options (PSO) Program who remain overlooked in the reforms of skill development and participation opportunities for adults with disability. The PSO Program operated for young people who left school in the years 1992 to 1998. PSO participants are comparable in levels of disability and support needs to people on the newer CP program but receive significantly less per capita funding, despite similar expectations and required outcomes. Many PSO programs are operated by organisations also running CP programs. The PSO users receive significantly lower per capita funding and less flexible programming sometimes involving higher fees and costs.

In 2008-09 DADHC reviewed the provision of adult day programs and consequently developed two new programs for people not receiving day program

supports: "Life Choices" for adults aged 25 to 54 years and "Active Ageing" for adults with disability aged 55 to 64 years. These are accompanied by proposed spending measures under Stronger Together. Despite assurances to NCOSS, there were no reported review outcomes or forward estimates for per capita equity for people attending the PSO program.

Actions

That the NSW Government re-aligns per capita funding levels of the Post-School Options Program to match those of the Community Participation program.

Cost: $7.5m recurrent

Recommendation 14: Towards 2030 Priorities for Older People

State Plan Priorities: R4, F4, F5, P4

Results

- Older people experience healthier lifestyles, increased participation and better health care and opportunities in NSW.
- Older people can share their experience and expertise within the community and among generations.
- People and families experiencing dementia have improved access to Dementia Advisory Services in their local and regional areas, as an important early intervention initiative.

Evidence/Rationale

The first year progress report of *Towards 2030: Planning for our Changing Population*, the NSW Government five year strategy to deal with the ageing of the NSW population, was released in July 2009. It sets out the operational achievements in the first 12 months of the *Towards 2030* strategy and details those actions that are continuing until 2013.

NCOSS acknowledges the achievements from amongst the 39 actions designated for the first twelve months, including the introduction of the $2.50 Regional Excursion Daily Ticket for pensioners, the continuing development by NSW Housing of Social Housing for Older Residents Design Guidelines, the NSW Health Chronic Disease Management Program, the additional 12 dementia clinical nurse specialists in hospitals, the vocational and training strategic plan by the Department of Education and Training to address skills shortages in industries with older workers and the launch of the Working Carers website.

An analysis of the *First Year Towards 2030 Progress Report* identifies that four of the 39 first year actions have been completed, around 25 first year actions are on track and up to ten first year actions are yet to be commenced. NCOSS notes that there are around 30 additional actions designated to be completed by 2013, the close of the five year Towards 2030 strategy and strongly urges regular public reporting on continuing progress.

> *"Alzheimer's Australia reports that the number of people with dementia in Australia is expected to increase by 327% between the years 2000 and 2050."*

NCOSS has used the Towards 2030 strategic outcomes identified to identify priorities.

1. *Getting in early: planning for change*
   NCOSS notes that, despite proportional population increases of older people, funding to the DADHC Ageing Program has remained static over several years. The Ageing Program funds leadership within non-government statewide organisations to promote the needs, rights and interests of older people through systemic advocacy, information provision and some project initiatives. NCOSS has been informed that several Ageing Program projects have been transferred to HACC funding in the past year. DADHC has reported the Ageing Program will be used to support some innovations in Towards 2030.

2. *Improving prevention and early intervention.*
   Alzheimer's Australia reports that the number of people with dementia in Australia is expected to increase by 327% between the years 2000 and 2050, while the total general population increases by less than 40% during that time. A new Alzheimer's Australia report *Keeping Dementia Front of Mind: Incidence and prevalence in 2009-50*[46] by Access Economics, predicts there will be 188,000 people in NSW with dementia, rising to 341,000 by 2050. A small proportion of these will be people younger than 65 years with early onset dementia.

   Dementia Advisory Services (DAS) are a valuable early intervention resource to people and families living with dementia. The first two NSW Dementia Action Plans provided 29 DAS positions across NSW, many on a part-time basis. These positions promote dementia awareness and training; provide information and referrals; link people to assessment and support services; and

assist carers with home management strategies. DAS, however, does not have comprehensive coverage in NSW. Additionally, the existing part-time positions must be urgently upgraded to full-time to meet existing demand and in light of a projected upsurge in the incidence of dementia.

3. *A productive, skilled and adaptable workforce.*
   Many of the 12 month actions in Towards 2030 have been designated "within existing resources". NCOSS contends that the provision of seed funding will provide the necessary resources to initiate innovative projects, to complete outstanding first year actions and to commence subsequent Towards 2030 actions.

   The provision of seed funding for a range of initiatives under Towards 2030 will ensure the energetic involvement of government agencies such as Transport, Health, Housing, Fair Trading and Police in deliberately responding to the needs of older people. It could also ensure specific reporting as part of the State Plan priorities and open up opportunities for people to become involved in a quality workforce, particularly responsive to older people.

4. *Facilitating participation in all areas of society.*
   A rapid growth in the proportion of older people in NSW is projected to result in increased state and federal expenditure. But there must be due recognition that this population can also create positive opportunities for NSW. The increasing support roles of grandparents, the enhanced financial resources of many older people, the increasing availability of a new group of willing and experienced hands are but a few of the opportunities that a healthier and longer lived retirement can present.

5. *Providing quality care and support.*
   While the primary responsibility for aged care rests with the Federal Government, older people's access to service supports and general community infrastructure clearly depends on a commitment from the NSW Government. This NSW commitment must be two-fold, involving short term improvements for the older people of today as well as longer term planning for a general ageing of the population.

Actions

The NSW Government supports positive ageing in NSW, led by DADHC, through the provision of:

- $492,000 to upgrade the eight existing part-time positions to full time in order to extend and build the capacity of Dementia Advisory Services across NSW.
- An additional $2.04m funding for the NSW Plan Towards 2030 for at least three cross-portfolio initiatives per year which engender collaboration between government agencies on critical issues for older people.
- $1.2m for inter-generational projects which share the experience and expertise of older people within the community.
- $1.2m funding for education and activity programs which foster positive ageing in older people in NSW.

Cost: $4,932,000 recurrent

Department of Human Services

Community Services

Recommendation 15: Community Services Grants Program

State Plan Priorities: R1, R3, R4, F1, F4, F6, F7

Result

Disadvantaged children, young people, families and communities are resilient and safe.

Evidence/Rationale

The Community Services Grants Program (CSGP) offers a diverse range of programs and services. It has at its core the provision of support and early intervention services to children, young people, families and communities aimed at reducing risk, preventing crisis, and supporting people and communities to overcome disadvantage. A key aspect of the CSGP is that it builds capacity allowing local responses to community needs.

The NSW Government has provided substantial additional resources in the child protection area as part of the *Keep Them Safe Action Plan* especially in Out of Home Care and the Brighter Futures Program. The new reporting framework (where only children at risk of 'significant' harm are reported to the Department of Community Services), the establishment of Child Wellbeing Units in various government agencies and the Regional Intake and Referral Services are all key enhancements to the child protection system. However, there is a need for additional resources to expand both universal and targeted support services so that children and families not reported to DoCS (i.e. not at risk of 'significant' harm) can receive appropriate services. For the Government to reduce child protection reports, address the numbers of children and young people who enter OOHC, additional preventative and early intervention services are needed should

form the greatest proportion of the child and family welfare service system in NSW. For example, Family Support Services provide support for families under stress. Typically, services in this sector help families (with dependent children) whose capacity to function is limited by the stresses of life.

CSGP is the only program in the Department of Community Services with a strong capacity to work across children, youth, family and community needs, and across the silos of government service systems, to ensure an integrated approach to service delivery. It also has a proven track record in harnessing funding, services, volunteers and community to deliver real results at a local level. For example, community and neighbourhood centres include services including:

- Information and Referral;
- Emergency Relief;
- Energy Accounts Payment Assistance;
- Water Payment Assistance Schemes;
- Case management;
- support services for older people and people with disabilities;
- home modifications and maintenance service;
- counselling services (general, financial, alcohol and drug, problem gambling, relationship);
- group learning activities for all age groups;
- community gardens;
- No Interest Loans Schemes;
- after school care; and
- much more.

Some keys strengths of services funded under the Community Services Grants Program:

- involving community members in identifying local issues and problems;
- providing information and education to community members;
- training workers to work sensitively in disadvantaged communities;
- involving the community in program design, planning and implementation;
- involving community members in community research and evaluation;
- tailoring the program to the unique needs and strengths of the community; and
- sensitivity to the ethnic and cultural diversity of the community.

Funding of $82.3m in 2009-10 is inadequate. This program has received no increase in funding since a small amount ($2.5m) in 1995, other than indexation, despite figures that indicate that poverty and disadvantage are increasing in NSW. Funding has not kept up with the cost of service delivery and services have seen a radical reduction in capacity over the past fifteen years despite increasing demand for assistance and services. Services report waiting lists, increased referrals, inability to provide much needed services, and the need for additional staffing to provide the services. Service capacity has decreased by at least 30% (based on relative cost of staff and the failure of indexation to keep up with real costs to services).

"Many (CSGP funded services) have cut back on services or hours of operation and some are now at risk of closure because funding has not kept pace with costs."

There are around 950 CSGP funded services across the state. Many of these have cut back on services or hours of operation and some are now at risk of closure because funding has not kept pace with costs. Most of these services will also require additional funds to meet the target group demand and to be able to provide the amount and quality of service that is required to address serious levels of disadvantage in our community.

The CSGP is fundamental to building the platform on which other services and programs, including early intervention and prevention programs, rests. Increased funding of the program is now a matter of the utmost urgency. Without additional resources other government funded programs will collapse.

Actions

- Provide increased funding for services to maintain vital services and expand service provision in new areas.

Cost: $50m per annum

Department of Human Services

Juvenile Justice

Recommendation 16: Residential Bail Support for Young People

State Plan Priorities: R1, R2, R4, F4

Results

- Reduction in the number of young people who are refused bail and remanded in custody because they do not have access to suitable housing or other matters to qualify for release.
- Reduction in inappropriate prison stays on remand by those awaiting trial, including young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Increased opportunity for young people awaiting trial to maintain connections to their community, including maintaining school, training or employment, compared to being on remand.
- Better links with other services to facilitate the provision of treatment, counselling and other remedial programs.

Evidence/Rationale

This recommendation is based on a position paper developed by UnitingCare Burnside in response to the Roundtable that was convened by NCOSS on 26 March 2009. Participants at the Roundtable discussion represented NCOSS, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), UnitingCare Burnside, CREATE Foundation, Wesley Mission, Anglicare, Barnardos, Catholic Social Services NSW/ACT, the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec), the Youth Action Policy Association (YAPA) and the Youth Justice Coalition (YJC).

An increasing number of children and young people in New South Wales are being held on remand in the state's Juvenile Justice Centres. This is due to current policies that make it unnecessarily difficult for children and young people to access bail and result in children and young people remaining in detention on remand when they should be on bail. In 2006 there were 3,623 children and young people admitted to custody on remand and by 2008 this figure had jumped to 5,081.[47]

Only one in seven, or 16% of children and young people on remand will go on to receive a custodial penalty at sentencing.[48] This means that the vast majority of children and young people are spending time unnecessarily in a detention centre.

The consequences of a high remand rate include:

- Unnecessary detention increases the challenges that children and young people face and potentially creates social problems.
- The high incarceration rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is damaging Indigenous communities.[49] In NSW, 38.8% of all children and young people on remand in 2008 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.[50]
- Recent allegations of overcrowding and increased assaults in Juvenile Justice Centres throughout New South Wales suggest a serious impact on the safety of both staff and the children and young people.[51]
- Time in a Juvenile Justice Centre is the "most significant factor in increasing the odds of recidivism".[52]

Considering only one out of every seven remandees in NSW will receive a custodial order at sentencing, thousands of children are being unnecessarily exposed to an environment that can have a detrimental effect on their future life chances, and a higher number of children and young people are at risk of cycling through the prison systems. As a result, these policies are likely to compound rather than alleviate juvenile crime in NSW.

When a child or young person who is homeless or in need of care is charged with a criminal offence they are often given an order as part of their bail conditions to 'reside as directed by the Department of Community Services'.[53] The Court requests that the Department of Community Services (DoCS) find appropriate accommodation for the child or young person. The court is not proposing that the child or young person be remanded in custody.

However, in many cases the 'reside as directed' order effectively turns into an order to remain on remand as DoCS is frequently unable to find acceptable placements for these children and young people.[54] Despite the clear responsibility DoCS has to these children and young people, the dearth of suitable accommodation options results in a high rate of remand for children and young people. Statistics from the Department of Juvenile Justice demonstrate that 95% of children and young people on remand during a three month period in 2006-07 had a court order to 'reside as directed'.[55]

NCOSS welcomed the NSW Government's announcement in the 2009-10 budget of a 24-hour Bail Hotline. While the full details of the Bail Hotline were not available at the time of writing, NCOSS believes it is an important first step to developing further services to assist children and young people access bail, meet bail conditions and find appropriate accommodation options.

Children and young people who are granted bail but remain on remand due to a lack of accommodation options should have access to a 'Residential Bail Support Service'. This will increase the limited accommodation and support options for children and young people in on remand and will increase the referral options for the Bail Hotline.

Each service would provide support and accommodation for an average of four to five children and young people per day between the ages of 12-17. These facilities would need to be gender specific, and in some cases, culturally specific.

Each service would cost approximately $875,000 per annum. This figure is based on each program operating 24 hours per day, 7 days per week with a minimum of two direct care/caseworkers per shift, a manager, administration officer and some brokerage funding. Programs could operate in key locations such as Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Coffs Harbour/Lismore, Newcastle, Wollongong, Western and South Western Sydney.

These services are comparable to the cost of remand detention.[56] However, better short and long term outcomes and cost-savings would be evident. Lessening the numbers of children and young people on remand would put downward pressure on an overloaded system. In addition, the programs would reduce the risk of recidivism for children and young people who have contact with a juvenile justice centre.

Actions

- To implement the Residential Bail Support Program for young people.

Cost: $7m per annum

Department of Human Services

Housing NSW

Recommendation 17: Increased supply of affordable rental housing

State Plan Priorities: E6

Results

In partnership with the Federal Government, a five year plan is developed and implemented to provide an additional 25,000 units of community, public and intermediate (or 'affordable') rental housing dwellings across NSW by June 2014.

Evidence/Rationale

There are 156,000 lower income households in NSW living in private rental who are experiencing housing stress[57]. 88,000 of these households are living in Sydney, and 68,000 in the remainder of the State. 60,000 of the lower income households in housing stress were families with children; 37,000 of these are living in Sydney and 23,000 in the remainder of the State.

> *"Only one in seven, or 16% of children and young people on remand will go on to receive a custodial penalty at sentencing."*

Actions

Develop, in partnership with the Federal Government, a five year plan to expand the provision of affordable rental housing in NSW by 25,000 dwellings by June 2014. This should involve two separate growth streams as follows:

1. *10,000 'high subsidy' dwellings over 5 years targeted at low income households seeking access to traditional community and public housing.*[58]

The last year has seen a substantial injection of Federal Government funds into the expansion of social housing, in order to both address the high level of housing stress being experienced by low income households and to stimulate economic activity in the housing industry. This welcome injection is sourced from a number of separate COAG agreements, including the social housing component of the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Package (NBESP), the National Partnership Agreement of Social Housing (Social Housing NP) and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (Remote Indigenous Housing NP).

Under these agreements NSW received Commonwealth funding of $1.454 billion in 2009-10 and has been promised a further $591m in 2010-11 for social housing growth.[59] Delivering this new housing within the timeframes set by the Commonwealth is a major challenge. Given this, NCOSS is not seeking additional capital funding for 2010-11. We are concerned, however, that level of funding available falls substantially after 2010-11, and that only the Remote Indigenous Housing NP continues beyond 2011-12.[60] There is therefore a pressing need for the Federal, State and Territory Governments to agree to further capital injections into the social housing sector from 2011-12 and beyond.

2. *15,000 'low subsidy' dwellings over 5 years drawing on a range of State contributions and partnership arrangements, targeted at a broader range of low to moderate income households seeking access to more affordable rental housing managed by non-profit housing providers.*

A range of measures is available to the NSW Government to expand the supply of intermediate (or 'affordable') rental housing managed by non-profit housing providers.

The recently released Affordable Rental Housing State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) contains a range of incentives to private developers to partner with registered community housing providers to generate additional intermediate (or 'affordable') rental housing.[61] In addition to these measures NCOSS would urge that consideration be given to leveraging additional intermediate (or 'affordable' housing) through the redevelopment of government-owned sites[62] and in connection with substantial Federal or State infrastructure investment in urban renewal projects.[63]

Most likely, however, the key driver for the expansion of intermediate (or 'affordable') rental housing is likely to be the Federal Government's National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS). Under NRAS the Federal and State Governments jointly provide recurrent subsidies over a ten year period to institutional investors in new housing that is rented at 80% of the market rent to eligible households.[64]

Subsidies for 50,000 NRAS new dwellings will be progressively made available across Australia by June 2012. In round one NSW projects were allocated a total of 1,074 subsidies. At the time of writing all allocations under round two had not been officially announced. The Commonwealth has indicated that initial allocations under round three, which opened on 1 September 2009, will focus on applications that link to social housing projects under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan or that involve the private sector developing projects on state-owned land that has been released for residential development.

Under NRAS round one registered community housing providers in NSW were able to bid for higher NRAS A subsidies equivalent to 40% of the capital cost of each dwelling. These subsidies, funded out of the State Government's Affordable Housing Innovations Fund, were crucial in ensuring the viability of NRAS projects in high cost locations, such as well located sites in Sydney. Unfortunately the capital available for this purpose has now been exhausted and no further NRAS A subsidies have been made available. NCOSS would urge the NSW Government to make a series of further capital injections into the Affordable Housing Innovations Fund to assist registered community housing providers with affordable housing projects in high cost locations.

Cost: $20m capital injection for the Affordable Housing Innovations Fund in 2010-11, and a commitment to a further injection of $20m in 2011-12

■ Recommendation 18: Better linking housing and support services

State Plan Priorities: F2, F3, R2

Results

The development of new sustainable models of partnerships delivering housing and support services to identified client groups under the Housing and Human Services Accord.

Evidence/Rationale

Housing NSW has partnered with nine other State Government human service and justice agencies to develop the NSW Housing and Human Services Accord.[65] The objective of the Accord is to assist social housing tenants with complex needs to receive the support services they need to live independently in the community and sustain their tenancies, and to assist clients of human service agencies to gain access to social housing.

Under the Accord target client groups include people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; older and frail aged people; people with a disability; young people under 20 years of age without family supports; families with children; and people on very low incomes, such as aged pensioners, the unemployed and very low paid workers.[66]

Government agencies involved in the Accord have commissioned a series of Shared Access Trials to pilot joined up arrangements under which mutually agreed clients are provided with public or community housing while receiving a support package from a human service agency. These trials are being evaluated in two phases.

A separate trial has been conducted in four locations of a proposed Client Information Sharing Agreement for Accord purposes.

NCOSS strongly supports this agenda which addresses longstanding holes in the safety net concerning vulnerable groups who need access to both secure housing and ongoing support services. The problem is, however, that the trials are being self-funded by the agencies concerned as the NSW

Government has said that Accord initiatives are to be funded within existing resources.[67] While this might work for small trials in defined geographical areas, once successfully models of joined up service delivery are demonstrated they need to be translated into more substantial and system-wide programs. The Government itself recognised this reality when it funded the successful Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) to provide housing and support to people with a mental illness.

Actions
The NSW Government should allocate an initial amount of $30m for joined up (housing plus support) service delivery under the Housing and Human Services Accord. The distribution of this funding, between both service delivery approaches and geographical areas, should be determined by the Human Services and Justice CEOs Forum, in consultation with the NGO sector, with Housing NSW as the lead agency.

Cost: **$30m in 2010-11**

■ Recommendation 19: Shared equity scheme for social housing tenants

State Plan Priorities: E6, R4

Results
The provision of opportunities for social housing tenants, who have the capacity to sustain a modest mortgage, to participate in home ownership.

Evidence/Rationale
Over the past decade moderate income households have experienced increasing difficulties in accessing home ownership, as the cost of housing has been rising much more quickly than household incomes.

At the same time large public housing estates have become the most visible symbol of increased polarisation and concentration of disadvantage within our major urban centres. This has prompted consideration of a variety of strategies to achieve a more balanced social mix in public housing estates through the redevelopment of existing stock, dispersal of disadvantaged households and encouragement of private housing investment.

While NSW has a strong record on regeneration initiatives, with major redevelopment projects under way in Bonnyrigg and Minto and consultation having commenced about a further project at Airds, to date it has not implemented any government-backed schemes to assist social housing tenants into home purchase opportunities. This is in marked contrast to the situation overseas and in other jurisdictions within Australia.[68]

"Over the past decade moderate income households have experienced increasing difficulties in accessing home ownership..."

Shared equity schemes have frequently been identified as a key means of assisting specified households into home ownership. While there are different models available, they all involve some form of equity sharing where purchasers benefit from lower purchase, and thus mortgage, costs in exchange for sharing any appreciation in the value of their home with either an equity loan provider or a shared owner. By trading some future capital gains for lower upfront financing costs, home ownership can become more accessible to certain lower income households who have the means to sustain a modest mortgage.[69]

Actions
Develop a shared equity scheme to assist social housing tenants with the financial means to sustain a modest mortgage into home purchase through the selective sale of government owned housing stock on larger housing estates, with the NSW Government retaining at least a 25% equity share of all stock offered for sale under the scheme.

There are a number of locations where the NSW Government is actively reducing the proportion of dwellings that are owned by Housing NSW, or developing major redevelopment plans for existing estates. These provide the most suitable locations for the initial implementation of a shared equity scheme for social housing tenants in NSW.

It is suggested that the NSW Government retain between 25% and 40% of the equity in the property, depending on the tenant's circumstances. The purchase of the tenant share would be funded solely by private resources or ordinary mortgages from private financial institutions. Potential purchasers would be offered access to independent financial and legal advice.

Cost
It is impossible for NCOSS to cost the budgetary impact of such a scheme. Essentially the Government would forego some revenue from the sale of stock by retaining an equity share for a set period or until certain events occurred.

Department of Justice and Attorney General

Attorney General's

Recommendation 20: A Charter of Human Rights in NSW

State Plan Priorities: R2, R4, S1, F1, F2, F4

Results

A NSW Charter of Rights could help guarantee the human rights of the people of NSW and ensure that all NSW laws and policies are consistent with these rights. It would:

- Protect the fundamental human rights of all members of the NSW community;
- Complement our democratic system by protecting the very rights and values that underpin it;
- Bring all our human rights into one easy to find law;
- Ensure that the practices of the NSW Government and public authorities are consistent with human rights;
- Ensure that laws are interpreted and applied in line with human rights.

Evidence/Rationale

International human rights standards are a set of values and guidelines that governments around the world have all agreed are essential for everyone to live with dignity and respect – no matter whom they are or where they live. Human rights are about the fair treatment of individuals. They are a means of promoting social justice, especially for people who have experienced long-term disadvantage such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples.

However, Australia is the only western nation without a national Bill of Rights. Both Victoria and the ACT conducted widespread public consultations which resulted in the development of Charters of Human Rights within their jurisdictions. Tasmania and Western Australia are also considering the development of Charters of Human Rights. The Australian Government is currently conducting a consultation process for the development of a Charter of Human Rights for Australia (due on 30 September 2009 after the release of the PBS) – but this Charter may only apply to Federal laws (or is likely only to apply to Federal laws).

Although some rights are protected by equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws these laws are patchy and do not cover many areas of rights. For example anti-discrimination legislation only addresses one form of discrimination at a time, such as discrimination based on race or disability. This approach does not recognise that people can be discriminated against on the basis of the combination of their race, sex, disability etc.[70] There are many other rights that are not protected such as the right to vote and freedom of expression.

It can also be argued that a charter of rights could embellish the scrutiny of legislation process in a number of ways, especially at earlier stages in the legislative process by requiring compatibility statements to be made to Parliament and by other means. The policy process could also be influenced by the growth of a 'rights culture', as a new awareness of rights related issues develops in the public service and by more formal means, such as the making of guidelines for policy formulation.[71]

Human Rights belong to all people. A Charter of Human Rights is a form of democratic insurance that helps to keep the Government accountable.

Actions

A widespread community consultation and education process on how best to protect and promote human rights. This would include whether or not NSW should adopt a Charter of Human Rights and if so what the Charter of Human Rights should include and how it would work.

Cost: $819,200 in 20010-11 and 2011-12

Department of Justice and Attorney General

Corrective Services

Recommendation 21: Intensive Residential Support

State Plan Priorities: R1, R2, R4, F4

Results

- Reduction in the number of adults who are refused bail and remanded in custody because they do not have access to suitable housing to qualify for release.
- Reduction in inappropriate prison stays on remand by those awaiting trial, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who do not otherwise have access to stable and secure accommodation.
- Increased opportunity for those awaiting trial to maintain connections to their community, including maintaining employment and studies, compared to being on remand.
- Better links with other services to facilitate the provision of treatment, counselling and other remedial programs.

Evidence/Rationale

A report released by the Select Committee on the Increase in Prisoner Population (2001) noted that the biggest contributing factor to the increasing size of the prison population is the growth of the number of people on remand, and the reality that most of these people are ultimately not given custodial sentences.[72] Between 2005 and 2006 nearly '10,500 people spent some time on remand. Fifty-three per cent (5,062) of these inmates were remanded for less than 30 days... a review of remand statistics undertaken by DCS in 2001 found that 56% of remand inmates received into custody in 1999 were discharged without a custodial sentence'.[73]

The provisions in the *Bail Amendment (Repeat Offenders) Act 2002* created a specific power to allow the court to consider the appropriateness of bailing accused persons, particularly those of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, to supervised accommodation for persons on bail. This is in line with the recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody in relation to gaol as a last resort and the over representation of Aboriginal persons in custody.[74] While a number of community based accommodation and treatment services will accept people on bail, and the concept has been recommended by a number of reviews and inquiries, there is no designated, official intensive residential bail support service in NSW. However, these intensive support services should only be for those who would otherwise be held in custody, not used as an additional restriction upon those who would normally be released on bail into the community.

An amendment related to the power to impose a condition 'that the accused person enter into an agreement to reside, while at liberty on bail, in accommodation for persons on bail' states that the Minister for Corrective Services 'is to ensure that adequate and appropriate accommodation for persons on bail is available for the purposes of the placement of persons on bail'.[75]

The Select Committee on the Increase in Prisoner Population also recommended that the Government should fund two bail hostels in NSW for women, with one specifically for Aboriginal women. They noted that the hostel should be for women and their dependent children and that this is piloted for two years, followed by an independent research evaluation.[76]

In making this recommendation NCOSS believes that intensive residential support must be run separately to Corrective Service facilities and must be based in homes in the general community. They need to be operated by NGOs and be linked with other ongoing community support services.

"A Charter of Human Rights is a form of democratic insurance that helps to keep the Government accountable."

Actions

- To pilot four community based and run intensive residential bail support services, one for women, one for Aboriginal women, one for young people and one for men, as a condition of their bail and to assist them to comply with other bail conditions such as attending appropriate rehabilitation or substance abuse programs.
- These pilots should be run by community based organisations (NGOs) over two years and then be progressively and independently evaluated.

Cost: $5.7m in 2010-11 and 2011-12

■ Recommendation 22: Post-Release Programs

State Plan Priorities: R1, R2, R4, S5, F4, P4

Results

- A reduction in the high recidivism rate amongst NSW offenders by assisting prisoners leaving prison to successfully adapt to life in the community and avoid re-offending.
- Increased supported accommodation places for recently released prisoners.
- Other post-release services to increase in line with inmate numbers.
- Service provision to be expanded in priority geographical areas experiencing a rise in ex-prisoner numbers.

Evidence/Rationale

NSW has the highest recidivism rate of all Australian states and territories. In 2004-05, 43.5% of all inmates who were discharged from full-time custody returned to a NSW prison within two years.[77] However recidivism cannot be looked at only in terms of a person's criminal activities. An important factor in the risk of ex-prisoners reoffending is the extent to which they are able to resettle in the community once released from prison. This includes access to support services, including social and legal, housing and participation in activities. Meeting the welfare needs of prisoners at the time of their release has also shown to help reduce recidivism rates. This includes money

for clothes, food, household items, medication, phone calls and transport home.[78]

Parole has also been found to result in lower recidivism rates than for those released without supervision at the end of their custodial sentence. For the parolees who did reoffend, it took much longer for them to do so than those who were simply released straight into the community. It should also be noted that post-release support is only provided to those released on parole and not to those released at the conclusion of a fixed sentence.[79]

Evidence from other jurisdictions is that intensive support upon release including appropriate housing reduces return to prison. The NSW Department of Corrective Services does fund non-government organisations, through the Community Funding Program, to provide a range of support services to offenders and their families; however the funding to these services has not matched the increase in the number of people requiring these programs. As well, given the severe shortage of public and affordable housing, an additional $1m annually should be earmarked for the provision of supported accommodation services to assist recently released prisoners to re-establish themselves in the community.

Action

- The NSW Government increases funding for post-release services under the Community Funding Program.
- Ensure that programs are culturally appropriate and that there are a variety of programs aimed at the different needs of men and women.
- That there are a range of programs available across regional, rural and remote NSW.

Cost: An additional $2.6m recurrent to increase existing programs; $1.3m recurrent to expand services across NSW

■ Recommendation 23: Rehabilitation Programs

State Plan Priorities: R1, R2, R4, S5, F4, P4

Results

- Increase in the number of prisoners who have access to constructive education and employment programs.
- Increased capacity for inmates to acquire skills and experience that will equip them with skills to successfully adapt to life in the community and avoid re-offending.

Evidence/Rationale

The number of people entering the prison system in NSW has been steadily rising in the last 10 years. In 2005-06 there was an average daily prisoner population of 9,101 and DCS predicts that this number will be 10,000 by 2010. Over the same time the imprisonment rate per 100,000 adult population in NSW has risen from 154 to 173.4, higher than the Australian imprisonment rate of 156.4 per 100,000.[80] While only 7.2% of inmates are women, this represents the highest proportion of women prisoners in the country.[81]

Opportunities for inmates to participate in suitable rehabilitation programs have not kept up with this growth in prisoner numbers. Access to programs is also reduced by a decrease in 'out of cell hours'. In NSW the average time out of cells is 11.9 hours for minimum security and 9.2 hours for medium to maximum security. It should be noted however that NSW inmates in 'secure and open custody average fewer out of cell hours than inmates in all other jurisdictions'.[82] Participation rates in programs are also decreasing with employment, work release and education participation rates all trending downwards since 2001-02 (thought there was a slight increase in participation rates for work release and education in 2004-05).[83] However, it should be noted that the total number of education modules that prisoners completed increased over 2004-05 and 2005-06.

Improved rehabilitation programs and proper discharge from prison can help to reduce recidivism. There needs to be culturally suitable programs in prison which are pitched at a level which is appropriate to the cognitive ability of the participant. If there have been any programs which have proved useful in prison, then these need to be reinforced in a supportive manner, post release if they are to have any prolonged impact.

Actions

- Increase funding for inmate rehabilitation programs to reverse recent falling participation rates.
- Ensure that programs are culturally appropriate and that there are a variety of programs aimed at different cognitive levels within the prison population.
- Conduct regular evaluations of programs to ensure that they are meeting prisoner needs and are assisting prisoners with integration and participation back into the general community.

Cost: $2.6m recurrent

Department of Justice and Attorney General

Legal Aid Commission

Recommendation 24: Community Legal Centres

State Plan Priorities: R1, R2, R4, F4, F7

Results

- Improved access to justice services by socio-economically disadvantaged individuals and families in NSW;
- Increased capacity to provide legal advice, information and education to disadvantaged people across the State;
- Avoidance of escalating and unnecessary costs accrued due to the inability of centres being able to assist at the early stage of a legal problem; and
- Increased confidence in the ability of the NSW Government to ensure that disadvantaged people have the same equity of access to legal services that the wealthy have.

Evidence/Rationale

Eighteen generalist and 13 specialist Community Legal Centres (CLCs) receive funding under the NSW and/or Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program (CLSP). CLCs target their services to our most disadvantaged communities and those most in need, such as women facing domestic violence, ex-prisoners, people with mental illness, young people, people with disabilities, Aboriginal people, and homeless people.

In February 2007, the Final Report of a 3-year joint Commonwealth/State Review of the NSW Community Legal Services Funding Program was released. NCOSS was represented on the Steering Committee of the Review and supports its recommendations.

The CLC Review found that:

- Community legal centres provide an effective and efficient form of legal service delivery in response to the legal needs of disadvantaged members of the communities they serve;
- Centres should retain their flexible Strategic Service Delivery Model which allows centres to provide a range of legal services according to their research into local legal needs;
- The Community Legal Services Program is significantly underfunded; and
- Almost all centres are overwhelmed by demand for their services and cannot sustain their current level of service, let alone meet emerging service gaps.

"Despite the innovative and crucial work that CLCs are engaged in, many are desperately underfunded and face increasing demand."

Other research in 2006 found that CLCs' work is characterised by an emphasis on early intervention – advice and information provided to people in a plain English, non-bureaucratic manner, often at early stages of a legal dispute. This intervention could make a huge difference to the lives of individual people and the NSW community.

Despite the innovative and crucial work that CLCs are engaged in, many are desperately underfunded and face increasing demand. The 2009 ACOSS survey found that 115,219 people were turned away from community services organisations, including CLCs, during 2007-08, a 50.5% increase on the numbers turned away in 2005-06. The survey also found that, for 2006-08, community services organisations experienced a 23.2% increase in demand for their services from 2006-07.

NCOSS therefore supports the provision of additional funding to bring all CLCs up to a minimum funding baseline of $500,000. NCOSS also supports new funding for employment law services, legal services for refugees and legal services for people with intellectual disabilities.

Action

- The NSW Government increases the existing budget for the Community Legal Services Funding Program from $5.1m to $8.02m recurrent (in order to bring all CLCs up to a minimum funding baseline of $500,000).
- The NSW Government provides funding of $500,000 per year for the provision of new services relating to employment law, legal services for people with intellectual disabilities, and legal services for refugees.

Cost: $3.51m per annum

Department of Industry and Investment

State and Regional Development

Recommendation 25: Regional Service 'Hubs'

State Plan Priorities: P6, P7, S8

Results

- Affordable corporate services for regional and rural NGOs.
- Targeted infrastructure for regional economic development.
- Reduced compliance and on costs for participating services.
- Enhanced capacity for participating community services to focus on their core functions of service delivery and community development.

Evidence/Rationale

There continues to be considerable interest in the potential benefits and efficiencies of shared service arrangements within the non-government sector (*Sharing Financial Administration*, NCOSS, 2007, *Shared Services in Community Housing*, Office of Community Housing 2007). In the past year NCOSS has noted a significant increase in demand for information /resourcing on models of shared services from both the sector and Government agencies.

Community organisations, particularly those in regional and rural NSW, often have limited access to specialist corporate services such as human resource advice, strategic planning, financial administrative support, IT support and professional development opportunities. In addition, many of these services are small NGOs with high compliance costs relative to their funding base. The PBS regional consultations undertaken by NCOSS during 2008-09 reinforced the high and unmet needs of non-metro NGOs; particularly in the areas of human resources management, information/ communications technology and management and governance issues.

The corporate support needs of these organisations are best understood and delivered locally. This reduces the costs and increases relevance. However, community services outside of the metropolitan areas frequently struggle to access and afford corporate support services.

Regional Service Hubs (RSH) provides a model of a capacity building strategy that deliver regional corporate services, within reach and within budget. Functions would include:

- Delivering much needed corporate services to NGOs in regional and rural NSW.
- Facilitating more cost effective services (such as accounts, training) through packaging aggregated regional demand.
- Generating local employment opportunities.
- Leveraging business support (pro bono and subsidised expertise) and brokering affordable training opportunities to meet identified regional NGO needs.

The RSHs should be non-government organisations that understand the 'business environment' of the client groups and can provide specialised support to meet the needs of NGOs across program areas and service types.

Actions

Over a three year period, commencing 2010:

- Provide funding to establish pilot Regional Service Hubs in three rural and regional areas.
- Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of this model in years 2 and year 3.

Cost: **$979,000 in 2010-2011 ($2.94m over three years)**

Department of Industry and Investment

Energy

Recommendation 26: Rebates for low income households in NSW

State Plan Priorities: E1

Results

Low income households receive necessary help with essential living expenses

Evidence/Rationale

Australia is faced with a relatively new form of social disadvantage - an increasing number of 'working poor' people whose main source of income is wages. The working poor phenomenon is the result of significant changes in the workforce including an increasing number of part-time and/or casual employees.

At June 2008 there were around 3 million people or 28.5% of all employees in Australia worked part time (i.e. less than 35 hours a week in all jobs).[84] The vast majority of these workers are women (2.1 million).

Casual employees (i.e. those without paid leave entitlements) rose as a proportion of total employment, from 17% in 1992 to 20% in 2007.[85] This included large increases in industries not traditionally associated with casual labour including manufacturing, communications, finance and insurance.

The combination of part time and casual employment leaves many people with low, insecure and variable income which can lead to financial stress.

NCOSS believes concessions have the capacity to deliver much needed help to low wage earners to meet their day to day living expenses. For example, transport concessions provide a useful way to generate increased social participation and reduce isolation from services and employment (see Ministry of Transport section). Energy rebates ensure a higher standard of living, greater standard of health and cleanliness and a greater degree of comfort for recipients.

In this respect concessions and rebates should not be treated as merely a cost to Government. Indeed because capacity to pay leads to increased social participation, there are a range of social and economic benefits attached to the provision of concessions that may outweigh any immediate costs.

From 1 July 2009, The NSW Government introduced additional consumer protection measures including:

- $65m over five years to increase pensioner energy rebates from $112 to $130 per annum, indexed to CPI; and
- $27.5m over five years to extend energy rebates to include recipients of Carers Allowances (child under 16), Sickness Allowances and Special Benefits.

NCOSS welcomed these measures. However, this widening of rebates the system does not cover all allowance recipients and no working poor households. Working poor people should be entitled to rebates or concessions. This is the case in Victoria.

NCOSS calls for the extension of energy rebates to low income households in addition to pensioners. This can be achieved by extending the energy rebates (at $130 per annum) to households with low income including all households reliant on Centrelink allowances and people entitled to low income Health Care Cards.

As there should be one rebate per household not all Health Care Card holders and Centrelink allowance recipients will be eligible for the rebate. The additional cost to the NSW Government will be around $45 per annum.

"NCOSS believes concessions have the capacity to deliver much needed help to low wage earners to meet their day to day living expenses."

Action
Extend the $130 energy rebate to all Health Care Card holder households.

Cost: $45m per annum

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Premier and Cabinet

Recommendation 27: Domestic Violence Homicide Review Team

State Plan Priorities: R1, F4

Results
- Reduction in the number of deaths caused by domestic violence.
- An early, more integrated and consistent response to domestic violence.

Evidence/Rationale
In NSW domestic assaults consistently account for 35 – 40% of all reported assaults.[86] In 2006 there were 26,429 domestic related assaults (around 35% of all assaults), with many suffering serious injuries.[87] Aboriginal women reported experiencing domestic violence at six times the NSW average and in 2003-04 Aboriginal women were 31 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of assault than non-Aboriginal women.[88] The estimated total annual cost of domestic violence to the NSW economy is $2.8 billion.[89]

While it is not known precisely how many domestic violence related deaths occur in NSW, there are on average 77 domestic homicides in Australia a year and domestic homicides make up around 20% of all homicides in NSW. It is estimated that around 20-30 domestic violence related deaths occur in NSW every year.

There is clearly a strong case for the introduction in NSW of a Domestic Violence Homicide Review Team similar to the ones that have been operating in the United States since the 1990s. The key to prevention of domestic homicide is to gain a better

understanding of patterns, prior indicators and gaps in responses. Conducting reviews of domestic violence related deaths is one way of getting a better understanding of the nature and pattern of lethal domestic violence and abuse. A fatality review brings together representatives from various agencies: police, courts, coroner's office, community (NGO), corrections, health, domestic violence services, shelters, perpetrator programs, child protection agencies and other professionals with relevant expertise.[90]

Overseas, domestic violence-related homicide review teams share the position that domestic homicides are preventable, given that risk factors are usually present prior to the ultimate response of homicide. The purpose of these review teams is to understand whether there were gaps or shortfalls in service delivery in response to any problems that had been presented to agencies prior to the homicidal event and thereby to learn from the experiences. Domestic homicide review teams focus attention on victims' contact with, and access to, intervention strategies and their effectiveness. Above all, these domestic homicide review teams are not about blaming service providers but are about understanding agencies' roles and constraints in order to move forward, for the improvement of service delivery and for effective risk assessment and management to prevent such killings in the future.[91]

In 2006 the NSW Ombudsman stated in his report to the NSW Parliament that the NSW Ombudsman supports the establishment of a domestic violence homicide review process:

> because we believe it has the potential to improve the collective understanding and knowledge of agencies, including NSW Police, about how domestic homicides come to occur and what strategies and practices may reduce the risk of their occurrence. A domestic homicide review process would in this way support the efforts of NSW Police to continually improve its overall response to domestic violence.[92]

NSW also established the Domestic Violence Homicide Review Advisory Panel consisting of senior Government officers and eminent non-Government representatives. Chaired by Dr Lesley Laing, the Deputy Chair of the Premier's Council Preventing Violence Against Women, the Panel has submitted its final report to the Premier. This detailed report is currently under consideration by Government.

Action

- Establish a Domestic Violence Homicide Review Team within the Office of the NSW Ombudsman.

Cost: **$512,000 - $819,200 recurrent commencing in 2010-11 based on three positions to lead the process**

Recommendation 28: NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework

State Plan Priorities: R1, R3, S1, F1, F4, F5

Results

- A Whole of Government response, coordinated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office for Women's Policy to address domestic and family violence.
- Reduction in deaths, injuries and the emotional impact of family violence.
- More effective response to women and children experiencing violence.
- Strengthen the response of police, courts, health, housing, education and community services to violence against women.
- Raise the profile of the issue of violence against women and encourage people to speak out.
- Improve services and service provision to women and make services more accessible.

Evidence/Rationale

It is difficult to get information about the extent of violence that women experience. This is due to a range of factors including the acceptance by some people and cultures that violence should not be discussed outside the family, fear of reporting or shame associated with reporting, belief that there is nothing that can be done, fear of the person that committed the violence or belief that the violence was not 'serious' enough to report. Therefore information about the levels of violence experienced can only be based on those instances that are reported.

The number and rate per population of all types of assault reported in NSW increased steadily from 1997 to 2001, but have been stable over the period 2002 to 2004.The trend for domestic assaults has closely followed that of all assaults, with domestic assaults consistently accounting for 35 to 40% of all assault incidents each year. For example, in 2004, the NSW Police recorded 68,984 incidents of assault. Of these, 25,761 (37.3 %) were domestic assaults.[93] The majority of domestic violence victims were women (71.1%) and the majority of offenders were male (80%).

A Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research facts page shows that in the 12 months to December 2003, NSW Police recorded 2,707 adult female victims of sexual or indecent assault.[94] However, in the 12 months to April 2004 10,100 adult women were sexually or indecently assaulted in NSW.[95] In 2006 NSW court statistics showed an increase in the proportion of people convicted of sexual offences, from 48% in 2004 to 59% of persons charged in 2006 in the Higher courts and 41% (2004) to 49% (2006) in Local Courts.[96]

Research also shows that adult survivors of child sexual assault suffer chronic and complex sexual assault trauma. Sector estimates indicate that 90% of adults represented in mental health, drug and alcohol services, corrective services and psychiatric units have a history of childhood sexual assault. Research identifies that a best practice approach to service delivery for this client group is to offer services which are holistic and that recognise recovery time may be considerable.

The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework aims to:

- develop prevention programs to reduce violence against women;
- conduct community education and training;
- enhance linkages within and between Government and non-government agencies;
- develop strategic policy responses; and
- support strategies and programs with partnership agencies aimed at preventing violence against women.

The Strategy is a state-wide, whole of government approach to reducing violence against women. The Strategy aims to prevent and respond to violence against women through:

- Raising awareness of, and understanding about, violence against women.
- Developing and promoting effective prevention strategies.
- Improving women's access to services.
- Improving interagency co-ordination.
- Improving the criminal justice response to violence.

Currently the Violence Prevention Coordination Unit, established in the Office for Women's Policy in May 2008 is leading a whole-of-Government response to violence against women. In its first year the Unit has focussed on domestic and family violence and has been actively working on developing a Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework that will be a blueprint for agency responses to this violence. The Framework is due for release at the end of this year.

"Sector estimates indicate that 90% of adults represented in mental health, drug and alcohol services, corrective services and psychiatric units have a history of childhood sexual assault."

However, in order to ensure the effectiveness of this framework the NSW Government needs to commit to appropriately funding services under this program.

The Victorian Government Women's Safety Strategy is often held up as a good example of what can be achieved with appropriate funding, commitment and support across Government, the public service and with the non-government sectors. The Victorian Government's commitment to the reforms is clearly visible through an ongoing process of community consultation, injection of large amounts of additional funding and a high level leadership of the system by government ministers and public service officials.[97] The Strategy includes programs aimed specifically at Aboriginal family violence, violence experienced by children and young people.

Funding is also available, under the Victorian strategy, for a five year study to evaluate the family violence reform strategy, focusing on the integration of intervention responses.

The project will document the development of inter-agency governance of family violence services, including by police, government and non-government organisations. It will examine women's, children's, men's and practitioners' experiences and decisions, and how practitioners work individually and in cooperation with others to deliver services to the victims of family violence, and intervene with offenders. The research will be conducted by two universities.[98]

Actions and Cost

- Department of Premier and Cabinet to provide $40.96m over 4 years to reform and integrate a strategic response to domestic and family violence in NSW.
- A further commitment of $17.5m from the Department of Justice and Attorney General, NSW Health and the Department of Human Services to provide a whole-of-government commitment to addressing domestic and family violence and supporting women and children who have experienced violence.

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Human Services CEOs Cluster

Recommendation 29: An Industry Development Plan for the NSW non-government human services sector

State Plan Priorities: P2, R4, S8

Results

- A state-wide coordinated approach to the sector's development, based on a comprehensive workforce profile that informs better planning to meet the current and projected needs of the industry and its clients.
- A highly skilled workforce with the capacity to deliver quality services that meet the needs of the people of NSW.
- An actively enabling funding, policy and regulatory framework that supports the growth of the sector.
- Enhanced capacity for the NGO sector to deliver quality services to the community in partnership with government.
- Improved capacity to attract and retain a quality workforce and effectively compete with other industries in the labour market.

Evidence/ Rationale

The non-government human services sector receives over $1.5 billion each year in funding, is comprised of over 7,000 organisations and delivers an extraordinary range of essential services to the people of NSW. The *2009 Australian Community Sector Survey* (ACOSS, 2009) found a 23.2% increase in demand for services in the year 2007-08. The impact of the global financial crisis is now having an even greater impact on human services, with organisations reporting increasingly stretched resources.[99]

Like any other vital and growing industry, it needs a long term strategic plan to ensure its sustainability and capacity to meet the demands of the future.

Despite the evidence of a rapidly increasing need for services, there is not the commensurate capacity in the workforce to meet demand. A recent national survey of workers in the industry by the Australian Service Union (ASU) reveals the critical and growing retention and recruitment issues facing the sector. Nationally 52% of workers are not committed to staying in the industry beyond five years, and the vast majority of the respondents were from NSW. The report demonstrates that comparatively poor wages and conditions, lack of career opportunities and the difficulties and risks associated with the work, are major reasons why people leave the sector and inhibit our ability to recruit quality staff. The *2009 Australian Community Sector Survey* indicated that 64% of respondent agencies were experiencing difficulty in attracting appropriately qualified staff.[100]

These findings were further confirmed in recent research conducted by the University of NSW Social Policy Research Centre: "NGO workers perceived government organisations to provide better conditions of employment in the way of pay, job security and career paths. As these factors relate to workers' material rewards and conditions, these beliefs are likely to act as powerful incentives for workers to move out of the NGO sector."[101]

A number of reports across various sub-sectors of the industry have produced similar and additional findings; for example the *Working in Community Aged Care: Growth or Crisis* report identified the sector's image, attracting younger workers and competitive wages as some of the key issues facing the future workforce in aged care workforce. While the sector is experiencing substantial growth (22.6% between 1999-2004, ABS Labour Force Survey), it is also ageing relatively more quickly than other sectors and experiencing increasing demand for its services.

The 2008 Australian Community Sector Survey found that in NSW there was an average staff turnover equivalent to 17% of the workforce. [102]

There is some data available for sections and sub-programs within the industry but a serious lack of information about the whole NSW sector and its current and projected workforce needs; a finding reinforced in the recent research by the University of NSW Social Policy Research.

> "There is a critical gap in community service workforce data, and this limits workforce planning, development and research. Changes and additions to the collection of national and state-wide data are recommended. This includes disaggregating employment in non-profit and commercial organisations, and between community service subsectors within the Australian Census; and establishing a register of not-for-profit organisations."[103]

There is a priority need for research that:

1) maps the composition and structure of the NSW NGO human services workforce;
2) identifies the current and emerging trends and needs within the workforce; and
3) assesses the position of the sector workforce within the context of the current labour market, including factors impacting on retention and recruitment. This research should be pursued in conjunction with universities, and labour market analysts.

Actions
Over a three year period, commencing 2010, provide funding to NCOSS to develop a state wide industry plan for the non-government community sector that includes:

- The development of a comprehensive workforce profile, including current demographics, trends, projected growth/gaps and recruitment capacity within the broader labour market.
- An industry-wide needs assessment and development of collaborative cross-sector strategies to address emerging industry skills gaps and projected client needs.
- A marketing/communications strategy to enhance and improve the visibility and profile of the sector with prospective employees and the general public.
- The establishment of a state-wide non-government community services industry Task Force comprised of key stakeholders across higher education and vocational training providers, Government human services agencies, NCOSS, unions and other industry peaks.
- The development of a standard funding agreement that minimises current high transaction costs, barriers to growth/investment and enables longer term planning.

Cost: **$512,750 in 2010-2011 ($1,538,250 over three years)**

Department of Services, Technology and Administration

Cross Agency Recommendation: Department of Services, Technology and Administration and Department of Human Services Recommendation 30: Implementation of an ICT Strategy for the Human Services NGO Sector

State Plan Priorities: P2, P7, S8

Results
- A highly customised and cost effective 'shared service model' of information and communications technology (ICT) systems and support for funded human service NGOs across NSW.
- A 'shared services' model of aggregated ICT services (telephonic and data) provision at the regional level that delivers competitive advantages via bulk purchasing.

"There is a critical gap in community service workforce data, and this limits workforce planning, development and research."

- A sector workforce well trained and equipped to maximise the use of ICT in all aspects of service delivery including data collection, referrals, acquittals and knowledge management.

Evidence/Rationale
This recommendation builds on the prior achievements of the NCOSS partnership with the NSW Government Better Service Delivery Program (BSDP) and Human Services Net (HSNet) in developing the ICT capacity of the NGO sector. Through this partnership NCOSS has played a significant role in the development and implementation of newer ICT equipment and applications for NGOs in NSW.

Between 2001 and 2006 the NCOSS BSDP/HSNet IT Project managed and delivered the following IT capacity development initiatives:

- Provision of internet connections and hardware to NGOs.
- Basic IT skill training to BSDP participating NGOs.
- A change management strategy including the co-ordination of implementation workers across NSW.
- A change management toolkit.
- A Human Services Net training strategy and programs.
- A client management subsidy and implementation system.

Following the implementation of these initiatives it was determined that the NGO sector needs its own ICT strategy. Comprehensive research was undertaken in 2007- 08 to identify the ongoing, emerging and unmet ICT requirements of the NGO sector and to establish an agenda for meeting those requirements.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capacity is now integral to communications, research, knowledge management, funding and promotion. In addition statutory reporting, financial acquittals and funding applications also increasingly depend on ICT.

Appropriate ICT applications and adaptations have the potential to bring improvements to financial and administrative processes, to reduce costs and to strengthen relationships. Strategies that build this capacity are therefore an essential part of the sustainability and vitality of the sector and a significant cross-sector issue.

The research undertaken by NCOSS revealed the critical need for more investment in the ICT capacity of the human services NGO sector in NSW. Some of the key findings included:

- An entrenched digital divide between NGOs, based on size /income/location.
- A chronically under-met need for ICT training.
- Lack of appropriate, accessible and affordable ICT information, resourcing and support.
- Significant opportunities for more appropriate and cost effective models of ICT provision, maintenance and support based on aggregated demand.
- Substantial opportunities to implement 'shared service' models to meet the ICT needs of NGOs at a regional level.

Given the Government's increasing requirement for funded services to provide data, acquit funding and share information electronically, it is essential that the sector has the ICT capacity to meet these needs. There are compelling reasons to ensure service delivery is not compromised by an inequitable and inefficient ICT capability framework across the sector.

Actions

Over a three year period, commencing 2010, provide funding to NCOSS to implement the state-wide ICT Strategy for the human services NGO sector including:

- A regionally-based 'shared service model' of ICT support, maintenance and resourcing for clusters of NGOs.
- Substantially increased ICT training provision across identified high need areas including Western Sydney, Central Coast and Far and Central West of NSW.
- Regional trials and development of a 'shared service' model of NGO based aggregated ICT services for application across the sector.
- A sector specific ICT *"How To"* Guide for negotiating and contracting ICT services.

Cost: **$1,715,000 in 2010-2011 ($5,145,000 over 3 years)**

Department of Transport and Infrastructure

Ministry of Transport

Recommendation 31: Capacity to pay transport related fines

State Plan Priorities: R2, R4, S1, F1, F2, F3, F4, P4, P7, E3, E8

Results

- A reduction in disproportionate hardship faced by low-income fine recipients.
- A potential reduction in State Debt Recovery Office enforcement costs.
- A potential savings in costs associated with a reduction in pursuing unpaid fines for the criminal justice system.

Evidence/Rationale

Because traffic and CityRail fines in NSW are fixed in level, they are economically regressive in practice. As a result fine recipients on lower incomes suffer relatively more severe consequences than those on higher incomes.

Any monetary penalty will create significant hardship for low income people. Low income households typically have little or no disposable income, and face financial barriers to accessing basic services. Households relying on an allowance or pension income are in a particularly precarious position, with limited capacity to enter into even very low level time to pay arrangements. Other factors such as health and disability can further compromise the ability of low income people to meet the obligations imposed by a monetary penalty. This situation is exacerbated when individuals on low incomes accumulate unpaid fines, creating a seemingly inescapable spiral of fine related debts.

In Europe, Canada and Latin America, the fine penalty is fixed at the equivalent of an individual's one day of pay.

Transport related fines impact significantly on low income households located in outer suburban and rural and regional areas that do not have ready access to public transport, and are reliant on motor vehicles to access jobs, education and services. They also impact upon the capacity of individuals to meet family responsibilities: for example NCOSS is aware of a number of cases where carers of people with disability who have had their license suspended are no longer able to provide transport to important destinations, including medical appointments.

Many Aboriginal communities across NSW face extreme transport disadvantage, with limited access to motor vehicles and licensed drivers, and dislocation from public transport services. As a result of these limited transport options, a transport related fine can have a 'community wide' effect. NCOSS consultations have revealed that there are a number of Aboriginal communities in NSW adversely affected by license suspensions. Frequently, there is a capacity to pay issue, and those affected may include adults who are unable to hold a license because of unpaid fines and enforcement fees for relatively minor offences committed as a young person (e.g. riding a bicycle without a helmet).

Financially disadvantaged groups such as homeless young people also have difficulty in accessing transport systems due to the cost of tickets and risk of incurring fines when travelling without tickets. Whilst fines are a legitimate mechanism for deterring those who deliberately avoid paying for public transport, NCOSS is concerned that this is a flawed basis for fines in relation to those who do not have the capacity to pay (such as homeless young people).[104] Without the financial capacity to travel on public transport these young people cannot readily access essential support, advocacy, educational, employment, health and welfare services. Moreover, it is impossible for these young people to pay the fines, which escalate with each non-payment. With their debt accruing, financial and social disadvantage is further entrenched and emotional and psychological stress exacerbated.[105]

NCOSS believes that the NSW Government could implement a system in NSW that allows some Centrelink beneficiaries (such as pensioners and New Start recipients) and other low income earners to receive reductions in fine amounts for transport related infringements including non-serious traffic, parking and CityRail fines. This system would at least reduce the disproportionate fine burden faced by those on lower incomes. NCOSS recommends that the cost of tickets for public transport use, and the cost of fines for not having a ticket, should be underpinned by an obligation to provide essential transport service that meets the needs and accessibility of the people of NSW.

It is difficult to measure the potential revenue impact of introducing a basic capacity to pay measure into NSW transport related fines. There is limited information available on the number or type of fines levied on lower income people. NCOSS estimates that approximately 90% of fines revenue is sourced from motor traffic fines. In estimating the forgone revenue for fine reductions to low income people, NCOSS has assumed that 10% of traffic fine recipients would be likely to claim a reduced fine amount.

"In Europe, Canada and Latin America, the fine penalty is fixed at the equivalent of an individual's one day of pay."

Any shortfall in fine revenue generated by these capacity to pay measures are likely to be offset by a number of factors including a reduction in costs within the criminal justice system in the pursuit of unpaid fines and reduced costs for the State Debt Recovery Office. These measures are also likely to increase social inclusion, health and wellbeing and increased participation in education, employment and leisure activities for disadvantaged people.

Actions

NSW Government to investigate the potential for implementing a system where the fine relates to the income. For example:

- Offer a 50% reduction to Centrelink income support recipients for transport related fines relating to non-serious offences
- Offer a reduction in fine amounts to working people with incomes less than 75% of Average Weekly Male Earnings, so that they pay 75% of the full fine.

Cost: $10.65m in 2010-11

■ Recommendation 32: Community Kilometres

State Plan Priorities: S1, S6, R4, F1, F2, F3, F4, P4, P7, E3, E8

Results

- Additional community transport services created through new contracting powers associated with bus service reforms.
- Better accountability and cost effectiveness for delivery of local services.
- Additional resources to address transport disadvantage.

Evidence/Rationale

The NSW Government previously proposed a 'community kilometres' concept that will enable government to broker bus and driver hours at a minimal cost from local bus operators. This useful proposal will assist in meeting a range of transport

needs that are currently not being addressed by existing funded programs, either due to eligibility criteria, low levels of funding or the service not existing in their area. This is especially important for rural and regional areas.

Though this creates a very useful opportunity for new services, the future potential to address transport disadvantage rests on a commitment from Government to provide appropriate levels of funding to meet costs for these new community transport services. There also needs to be the development of an effective process for community members to use community kilometres to meet local community needs. This would not only allow input into the delivery of local bus services, but also create opportunities for local NGOs, including community transport operators, to assist in the delivery of flexible community focused services in local areas.

NCOSS recommends that five pilot projects are developed – one metropolitan, one regional, two rural (large town and small town) and one remote. These pilots would be developed in close consultation with local communities and services and the funding will cover the development, implementation and evaluation of these pilots. The pilots will also identify the actual funding needed and the best brokerage model for each of these areas. These pilots should then be followed by the roll out of community kilometres across NSW.

Action

To provide recurrent funding in 2010-11 and 2011-12 for community kilometres projects in the five identified areas (metropolitan, regional, rural (large town and small town) and remote)

Cost: $15.98m over two years

■ Recommendation 33: Community Transport

State Plan Priorities: R4, S1, S6, F1, F2, F3, F4, P4, P7, E3, E8

Results

- Improved capacity of community transport operators to provide services to a range of people experiencing transport disadvantage.
- Improved connectivity of people accessing and using transport services in the community.

Evidence/Rationale

Transport disadvantage is defined by a number of factors including mobility, isolation and age. It is associated with both transport disadvantaged areas and transport disadvantaged groups of people.[106] Social exclusion occurs, and is exacerbated by, transport disadvantage – especially where transport disadvantaged groups of people live in transport disadvantaged areas. The Community Transport Program (CTP) aims to address transport disadvantage and the transport needs of these people.

There are 134 Community Transport providers receiving Home and Community Care (HACC) funding via the Ministry of Transport. However, not all of these programs are funded under the CTP. Over 45% of these programs do not receive CTP funding and the existing funding is inequitably distributed. This means that in many areas of NSW there is no access to community transport for people who are not eligible for HACC funded transport services. As CTP has a relatively broad focus, the program has the capacity to assist those who most need the services but are not eligible for, or are unable to use, other forms of transport. The need to address transport disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people and young people has been consistently identified as a priority by rural and regional communities. It should also be noted that where CTP services are funded, the funding is so low that operators have to reduce services.

Despite receiving indexation, Community Transport Program funding has remained stagnant in real terms, at $2.95m. The last significant allocation of growth funds for the CTP program was in 1998-99.

This low level of funding is now being exacerbated by increasing fuel costs. This has a high impact on service provision in rural and remote areas where there can be extensive distances between the individual and where the service they need is provided. In 2008 the impact of rising fuel costs was recognised by the NSW Government with an additional $6.7m being given to HACC funded organisations to subsidise volunteers for the rising costs of petrol.[107] It was also reflected in recent increases in taxi fares to allow for rising fuel costs. However, the needs of community transport programs facing similar issues have not been addressed.

Enhancement of this program would assist NGO community transport providers to meet the increasing needs of the community and to expand the range of services that they offer. It will also enable them to respond to the diverse community needs outside of traditional program areas such as HACC.

Actions

- For the NSW Labor Government to match the Opposition Coalition announcement of increasing Community Transport Program funding via the Ministry of Transport by $12m over four years.

- For CTP funding to be extended to all NSW Community Transport providers to enable transport services to support people with transport disadvantage who are not eligible for HACC services.

Cost
To increase funding to CTP providers over 4 years, commencing in 2010-2011, until funding is $12m recurrent per annum.

"We must begin to acknowledge that transport issues are a key factor in understanding the barriers that face many Aboriginal people."

Recommendation 34: Transport Services for Aboriginal Communities

State Plan Priorities: R4, S1, F1, F2, F3, F4, P4, P6, P7, E3, E8

Results
- Improved availability and appropriateness of existing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander communities.
- New services that reduce the social isolation of transport disadvantaged Aboriginal communities.
- Improved coordination between transport providers to meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

Evidence/Rationale
Due to a long history of social exclusion many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face geographic isolation from services and are unable to take advantage of existing services because they are not culturally appropriate. This is exacerbated by isolation from transport services and infrastructure. Poor consultation often reinforces this situation, with Aboriginal people often locked out of planning processes for transport services.

There are a number of key issues that impact upon the ability of Aboriginal people to access transport services, including physical isolation from public transport routes, lack of flexibility of in existing services, discrimination and poor coordination of services. Affordability of services is an important issue, particularly for low income Aboriginal people. Services can be expensive, particularly for people who don't have access to concession public transport fares.

Frequently there is poor coordination between local, public and community transport providers, which can make existing services difficult to use, or fail to take opportunities to share resources in order to solve community problems. The long travelling times mean that many people who do not have access to a motor vehicle are discouraged from attending medical appointments. Better coordination of services can help to improve links to vital services.

Solving transport disadvantage in Aboriginal communities will require a concerted approach from Governments, transport operators and local communities. We must begin to acknowledge that transport issues are a key factor in understanding the barriers that face many Aboriginal people. An important starting point is to create processes for Aboriginal people to be involved in planning for future transport needs.

Action
- $299,000 to fund two innovative Aboriginal transport projects to improve the delivery of transport to Aboriginal people.
- $1.45m to fund Aboriginal Regional Coordinators and local Aboriginal community based development workers, with a priority on inland areas of need.

Cost: $1.45m recurrent from 2010-11 for Aboriginal Regional Coordinators and Community based development workers; $299,000 in 2010-11 for the transport projects.

NSW Treasury

Recommendation 35: Funding for NGOs

State Plan Priorities: R4, S8, P1, P6

Results
- Improved outcomes for people and communities through effective partnerships between non-government organisations (NGOs) and Government.
- More effective delivery of services by NGOs on behalf of Government providing value for money.

Evidence/Rationale

The quality and effectiveness of community services organisations clearly depends on a high quality, capable, well managed and sustainable workforce. The Auditor General has reported that the State Government spent $5.5 billion in grants in 2007-08 which represented 12% of general government expenditure.[108] While this is not wholly for non-government community service organisations, with such significant investment it is important that the State Government ensure funding is sufficient to allow for the recruitment, ongoing development and retention of staff as well as meeting the growing demands for the services provided by these organisations.

The Australian Community Sector Survey 2009[109] shows that demand continues to outstrip the capacity of non-government community services organisations to provide the necessary support and assistance to the most vulnerable people. In NSW the survey showed that despite an increase in funding, staff and volunteers, services turned away 50% more people in the 2007-08 year compared to the previous 12 months. The survey results for NSW showed that

- There was a 23.2% increase in the number of people provided with a service between 2006-07 and 2007-08.
- There was a 50.5% increase in the number of people turned away in the same period.
- The types of services with the highest percentage of turn away rates were Child Welfare (49.4% higher than previous year); Youth Services (29.9% higher) and Housing/Homelessness (29.7% higher).
- Services most needed by clients (other than the service provided by their own agency) were long term housing, health care (including mental health and drug and alcohol services) and aged and disability services.
- 84% of respondents agreed that their organisation was targeting their services more tightly than in the past.
- There was a 7% increase in the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) paid staff and an increase in both paid and unpaid hours. However, for every five new staff recruited four left (showing turnover continues to be high).
- 62% of respondents (nationally) identified workforce issues as one of the top three issues affecting their organisation.
- There was a 7.4% increase in overall income with a 16.1% increase in funding from the NSW Government. Despite this 82% of respondents do not believe the funding received covers the true cost of delivering the service
- 37% feel that contract requirements adversely affect their organisation's ability to deliver services

A recent report prepared on behalf of the NSW Government by the Social Policy Research Centre[110] demonstrates that workers in community services NGOs are highly committed but require appropriate organisational support to continue working within the sector. The report notes low pay and job insecurity, often because the impermanent nature of funding arrangements has an impact on motivation and the capacity of organisations to retain good staff and to plan for the ongoing development of their workforce. The report highlights the central role of funding arrangements to workforce management and development. The report recommends that Government work with the sector, peak bodies, unions and professional associations on strategies to promote workforce capacity and sustainability for the sector including improvements in pay and conditions, considering establishing minimum qualification levels and standards and reviewing funding arrangements.

Industrially, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission handed down a decision in May 2009 that awarded significant pay increases to be phased in over an 18 to 24 month period for community sector workers in that state. The initial increase is for 6% effective from 13 July, 2009. The decision was based on recognising the historic undervaluation of community services work and was made in accordance with the Commission's Equal Remuneration Principle. The new rates are more closely aligned to those in the Queensland Public Service for comparable positions. The Queensland SACS Award decision provides a new benchmark for fair pay rates in the sector. The Australian Services Union (ASU) has indicated that it is their intention to lodge a similar case to seek increases for community sector workers in this state.

Actions

To provide a minimum 6% indexation rate to Government funded NGOs for the next three years to achieve comparable pay rates.

Cost:	**approx $150m in 2010-11, $159m in 2011-12 to $168m recurrent in 2012-13**

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[59] In 2009-10 NSW received $1,326.7m under the NBESP, $64.8m under the Social Housing NP and $63.2munder the Remote Indigenous Housing NP. In 2010-11 NSW has been promised $568.1 million under the NBESP and $22.9m under the Remote Indigenous Housing NP. All figures taken from Australia's federal relations: Budget Paper Number 3 2009-10 'Affordable housing section' pp.77-84. On 1 September 2009 the Federal Minister for Housing announced reduced funding allocations to all States and Territories under the NBESP. The reduced allocation to NSW for construction is now $1,764m and the number of extra dwellings 6,110. At the time of writing 301 extra dwellings had been approved for NSW under round one of the Social Housing NP, with the final allocation under round two yet to be announced. There has been no announcement of dwellings approved under the Remote Indigenous Housing NP.

[60] The Social Housing NP ends in 2009-10, the NBESP in 2011-12 and the Remote Indigenous Housing NP in 2017-18.

[61] In effect from 31 July 2009, refer: www.planning.nsw.gov.au/PlansforAction/Supportingaffordable rentalhousingpolicy/tabid/313/Default.aspx

[62] Including surplus sites owned by the Sydney Olympic Park Authority, the Sydney Harbour Foreshores Authority and the Barangaroo Delivery Authority.

[63] Such as the proposed new West Metro rail line, from Westmead to Central via Parramatta and Olympic Park, if it proceeds.

[64] For the period 1 May 2009 to 30 April 2010 the annual NRAS incentive is worth $8,672 per dwelling, consisting of $6,504 from the Commonwealth and $2,168 from the States. These amounts are indexed annually in line with the rents component of the CPI. Households renting NRAS dwellings may also receive Commonwealth Rent Assistance if they are receiving an eligible Commonwealth income support payment.

[65] The signatories to the Accord are the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO); the Attorney General's Department; the Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care (DADHC); the Department of Community Services (DoCS); the Department of Corrective Services (DCS); the Department of Education and Training (DET); the Department of Housing; the Department of Juvenile Justice; NSW Health; and NSW Police. A number of the signatory agencies are now formally part of the new Department of Human Services.

[66] See *'Who can become an Accord client?'* in NSW Housing and Human Services Accord Frequently Asked Questions, Housing NSW September 2008, included in the Accord Resource Kit for Partner Agencies. www.housing.nsw.gov.au/Changes+to+Social+Housing/Reshaping+Public+Housing/Accord+Resource+Kit+for+Partner+Agencies.htm

[67] NCOSS is pleased to acknowledge that a number of regional Accord projects have been included in the NSW Homelessness Action Plan, accessing funding under the COAG National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

[68] For details of home purchase assistance measures in other States and Territories see Home purchase assistance 2006-07: Commonwealth State Housing Agreement national data report, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, April 2008, table 2 p.11.

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Appendix 1
STATE PLAN PRIORITIES

State Plan Goals & Priorities

			RIGHTS, RESPECT & RESPONSIBILITY				DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES							
			Keeping people safe		Building harmonious communities		Healthy communities			Students fulfil their potential		A high quality transport system		Customer friendly services
NCOSS PBS Recommendations			Reduced rates of crime, particularly violent crime	Reduced rates of re-offending	Reduced levels of anti-social behaviour	Increased community participation and integration in community activities	Improved access to quality healthcare	Improve survival rates and quality of life for people with potentially fatal or chronic illness through improvements in health care	Improved health through reduced obesity, smoking, illicit drug use and risk drinking	Increasing share of peak hour journeys on a safe and reliable public transport system	More students complete Year 12 or recognised vocational training	Increasing levels of attainment for all students	Safer roads	Increased customer satisfaction with all Government services
			R1	R2	R3	R4	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
Department of Health	HEALTH	Reproductive Health					■							
		Provision of Appliances to Disabled People (PADP)												
		Smoking cessation support programs							■					
		Public dental services					■	■						
		Health NGOs					■	■	■					
		Transport for Health					■	■						
Department of Human Services	CROSS AGENCY	Improving services for people who are homeless[1]												
		Increased management support and research capacity												■
	AGEING, DISABILITY & HOME CARE	Home and Community Care												
		Seniors Card				■								
		Accommodation options for people with disability				■								
		Self-Directed Support for people with disability				■								
		Parity for the Post School Options Programs												
		Towards 2030 Priorities for Older People				■								
	COMM[2]	Community Services Grants Program (CSGP)	■		■	■								
	JJ[3]	Residential Bail Support for Young People	■	■		■								
	HOUSING	Increased supply of affordable rental housing												
		Better linking housing and support services		■										
		Shared equity scheme for social housing tenants				■								
Department of Justice & A-G	A-G's[4]	A Charter of Human Rights in NSW		■		■	■							
	CORRECTIVE SERVICES	Intensive Residential Support	■	■		■								
		Post-release programs	■	■		■					■			
		Rehabilitation programs	■	■		■					■			
	LEGAL[5]	Community Legal Centres	■	■		■								

FAIRNESS & OPPORTUNITY							GROWING PROSPERITY ACROSS NSW					ENVIRONMENT FOR LIVING					
Strengthen Aboriginal communities	Opportunities and support for the most vulnerable		Early intervention to tackle disadvantage				NSW: Open for Business			Stronger rural and regional economies		Securing supply of water and energy		Practical environmental solutions		Improved urban environments	
Improved health and education for Aboriginal people	Increased employment and community participation for people with disabilities	Improved outcomes in mental health	Embedding the principle of prevention and early intervention into Government service delivery in NSW	Reduced avoidable hospital admission	Increased proportion of children with skills for life and learning at school entry	Reduced rates of child abuse and neglect	Increased business investment	Maintain and invest in infrastructure	More people participating in education and training throughout their life	Increased business investment in rural and regional NSW	Better access to training in rural and regional NSW to support local economies	A secure and sustainable water supply for all users	A reliable electricity supply with increased use of renewable energy	Cleaner air and progress on greenhouse gas reductions	Better environmental outcomes for native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways	Housing affordability	More people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities, and participating in the arts and cultural activities
F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	P1	P2	P4	P6	P7	E1	E2	E3	E4	E6	E8
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(Appendix 1 continued)

NCOSS PBS Recommendations

State Plan Goals & Priorities

			RIGHTS, RESPECT & RESPONSIBILITY				DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES							
			Keeping people safe		Building harmonious communities		Healthy communities			Students fulfil their potential		A high quality transport system		Customer friendly services
			Reduced rates of crime, particularly violent crime	Reduced rates of re-offending	Reduced levels of anti-social behaviour	Increased community participation and integration in community activities	Improved access to quality healthcare	Improve survival rates and quality of life for people with potentially fatal or chronic illness through improvements in health care	Improved health through reduced obesity, smoking, illicit drug use and risk drinking	Increasing share of peak hour journeys on a safe and reliable public transport system	More students complete Year 12 or recognised vocational training	Increasing levels of attainment for all students	Safer roads	Increased customer satisfaction with all Government services
			R1	R2	R3	R4	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
Dept. I&D[6]	S&RD[7]	Regional Service Hubs												■
Dept. I&D[6]	EN[8]	Rebates for low income households in NSW												
Dept. Premier & Cabinet	PREM[9]	Domestic Violence Homicide Review Team	■											
Dept. Premier & Cabinet	PREM[9]	NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework	■		■		■							
Dept. Premier & Cabinet	CEO[10]	An Industry Development Plan for the NSW non-government human services sector				■								■
DST&A[11]	CROSS AGENCY	Implementation of an ICT Strategy for the Human Services NGO Sector												■
Dept. of Transport & Inf[12]	TRANSPORT	Capacity to pay transport related fines		■		■	■							
Dept. of Transport & Inf[12]	TRANSPORT	Community kilometres				■	■					■		
Dept. of Transport & Inf[12]	TRANSPORT	Community Transport Program				■	■					■		
Dept. of Transport & Inf[12]	TRANSPORT	Transport Services for Aboriginal Communities				■	■							
$$$	TREAS[13]	Funding for NGOs				■								■

Endnotes

[1] NCOSS believes that improved outcomes for people who are homeless must become a separate priority item in the State Plan
[2] COMM - Community Services
[3] JJ - Juvenile Justice
[4] A-G's - Attorney-General's
[5] LEGAL - Legal Aid Commission
[6] Dept. I&D - Department of Industry and Development
[7] S&RD - State and Regional Development
[8] EN - Energy
[9] PREM - Premier and Cabinet
[10] CEO - Human Services CEO Cluster
[11] DST&A - Department of Services, Technology and Administration
[12] Dept. Transport & Inf - Department of Transport and Infrastructure
[13] TREAS - NSW Treasury

Please note: Priorities P3 (Cutting red tape); P5 (AAA rating maintained); E5 (Jobs closer to home); and E7 (Improve the efficiency of the road network) are not included in the above table

FAIRNESS & OPPORTUNITY							GROWING PROSPERITY ACROSS NSW					ENVIRONMENT FOR LIVING					
Strengthen Aboriginal communities	Opportunities and support for the most vulnerable		Early intervention to tackle disadvantage				NSW: Open for Business			Stronger rural and regional economies		Securing supply of water and energy		Practical environmental solutions		Improved urban environments	
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F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	P1	P2	P4	P6	P7	E1	E2	E3	E4	E6	E8
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