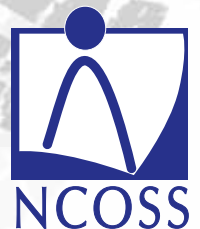


One step away

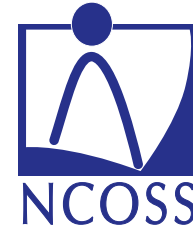
**Speak, Plan, Act! Achieving
fairness for everyone**

2015 NSW Election Platform



About NCOSS

The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) is the peak body for the social and community services sector in NSW. NCOSS works with its membership 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. 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.

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Introduction



Poverty affects nearly 900,000 people in New South Wales – more than in any other state or territory. The rate of poverty in NSW is also among the highest in Australia at 14.8%. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of people living in poverty in NSW, a further 7% are near, or at risk of poverty.

Here in NSW, our cost of living – particularly the cost of housing – mean that our family, our friends or indeed any one of us is just one step away from poverty or disadvantage.

As we approach the 2015 NSW Election, the Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) wants to see everyone speak about the issue of poverty and disadvantage in our state, plan for a fairer NSW and act to address poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation. This Election Platform provides an agenda to start that discussion.

NCOSS undertook extensive consultation with our members and stakeholders to develop this platform. The consultation identified four themes that helped shape the development of 13 specific proposals for action to reduce poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation including:

- **Bridging the divide to reduce inequality** – There are a range of specific services, interventions and initiatives that government must deliver to address the areas of greatest disadvantage in NSW. These recommendations outline areas for priority action to address issues for the most disadvantaged people in NSW.
- **Ensuring everyone has access to universal services** – The government plays an important role in delivering the universal services (eg health, education and transport) that provide us with access to opportunity and help us maintain our wellbeing. Addressing barriers such as cost and accessibility and ensuring equitable access are critical to ensure that opportunity and choice are available to all people in NSW.

“Here in NSW, our cost of living – particularly the cost of housing – mean that our family, our friends or indeed any one of us is just one step away from poverty or disadvantage.”

- **Planning so that communities flourish** – Planning for the future is about anticipating change, deciding where intervention can make a difference and identifying groups and locations that are in danger of missing out. Our planning must address the needs of everyone in society, particularly the desperate need for more social and affordable housing, so that everyone benefits from infrastructure investment.
- **A fair say in decision making** – Everyone should have the opportunity to be involved in and influence decisions that affect them, including people and communities experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

The recommendations in this platform provide a roadmap to improve the wellbeing, resilience and opportunities for people experiencing poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation, and if adopted, will contribute to building a stronger, fairer state. It is time for us all to **Speak, Plan and Act** to end poverty and disadvantage in NSW.

www.SpeakPlanAct.net

Recommendations



People on low incomes should be able to afford a decent standard of living



Recommendation

Develop and implement a Cost-of-Living Strategy to ensure all people on low-incomes can afford the essential services required for a decent standard of living.

What's the issue?

The cost of living is an issue of growing public concern, but it is people on low incomes who have been hardest hit by recent price increases. Targeted assistance is needed to ensure people on low incomes can continue to make ends meet.

The action needed

Commit to developing a cost-of-living strategy for people on low incomes. At a minimum, this strategy would:

Existing concessions are not well-targeted: many of those with the lowest incomes miss out on the assistance available to higher income earners.

.....
Concessions on council rates and water have not increased in over twenty years.

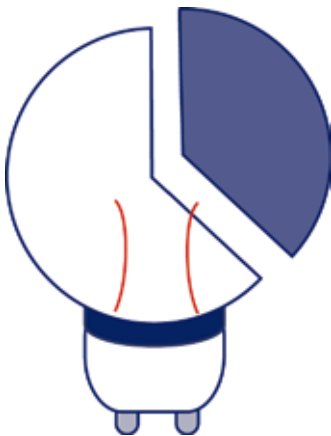
- Incorporate the findings of an independent review of concessions considering best practice improvements to the NSW system. This would address both equity issues, including improvements such as percentage-based energy rebates and the extension of transport concessions to all people on low incomes, and accessibility issues, including the establishment of a central access point for information;
- Commit to targeted measures aimed at reducing the number of people being disconnected from their energy supply due to inability to pay;

- Update the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) by increasing the cap and the level of subsidy;
- Provide dedicated funds to support low-income and vulnerable families with the cost of schooling; and
- Develop a plan to reduce food insecurity in low-income households.

The goal

A Cost-of-Living Strategy for people on low-income would enable the NSW Government to effectively direct assistance towards our shared goal of ensuring everyone can afford a decent standard of living.

The number of people being **disconnected** from their electricity supply increased by **37%** over the five years to 2012-13.



The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme cap has not increased in over **15 years** yet the cost of taxis has **risen significantly** in this same period.



According to Health Statistics NSW, **7.2%** of adults have **run out of food** in the last 12 months and been unable to afford to buy more.

Low-income households need affordable, secure and appropriate housing



Recommendation

Commit to investing a substantial amount of capital funding over four years to significantly increase the supply of social and affordable housing during the next term of government.

What's the issue?

Everyone needs a place to call home. Low income households in NSW are finding it increasingly difficult to secure rental housing that is affordable, secure and appropriate to their needs. This in turn limits their ability to obtain and retain paid employment, access education and training, and build a better life for themselves and their dependants.

The key market failure in housing is in relation to the provision of quality, well located rental housing that is secure and affordable for low income households, and there has been no growth in the supply of social housing since the completion of the Federal Stimulus Package. Strong population growth combined with gentrification of traditional low income areas has forced growing numbers of people experiencing poverty into overcrowded, marginal housing or has displaced them to distant areas with reduced access to jobs and other opportunities.

As at June 2014 the Government's Waratah Bonds program had generated investments totalling \$355 million. If allocated to social and affordable/intermediate housing, this would be sufficient to build almost 1,200 dwellings.

The action needed

Record amounts will be promised for infrastructure investment over the next parliamentary term. To ensure this investment benefits the most disadvantaged in our community:

- The supply of social and affordable housing must be recognised as a key infrastructure challenge facing the state. This requires an amendment to the Restart NSW Act; and
- Growth of social and affordable/intermediate housing must feature as a critical element of infrastructure planning.

The end goal

Expanding the availability of social and affordable/intermediate housing would reduce rental stress, improve household stability, reduce homelessness, provide a platform for increased social and economic participation and help locate housing closer to places of employment, education and training.

47.6% of low income households in NSW are in rental stress. NSW had both the **highest rate** of rental stress in a capital city and the highest rate in the balance of the state.



In 2014-15 just **2%** of the state's **\$15 billion** infrastructure budget is allocated to social housing capital works. **None of the \$6.6 billion** in project commitments and reservations under the Restart NSW Fund has been earmarked for housing.



The current number of social housing dwellings is only sufficient to meet **44%** of the **real need**, based on highly targeted eligibility requirements.

It's time to focus on ending homelessness together

Recommendation

Develop, in partnership with the NGO sector, a new 5-year NSW Homelessness Action Plan aimed at ending homelessness in NSW, preventing homelessness and intervening early.

What's the issue?

The 2009-14 NSW Homelessness Action Plan, **A Way Home**, outlines three linked strategic directions: preventing homelessness, providing effective assistance to people who are homeless and breaking the cycle of repeat homelessness. That plan has now expired.

While the NSW Government is implementing reforms to Specialist Homelessness Services, action is needed on wider reforms required in the mainstream service system to prevent homelessness or intervene early.

“While the NSW Government is implementing reforms to Specialist Homelessness Services, action is needed on wider reforms required in the mainstream service system to prevent homelessness or intervene early.”

There is increasing concern about a growing numbers of older single women being homeless or at risk of homelessness but as yet few if any effective service models to respond have been implemented.

The action needed

A new Homelessness Action Plan for NSW should be developed, with key aims to:

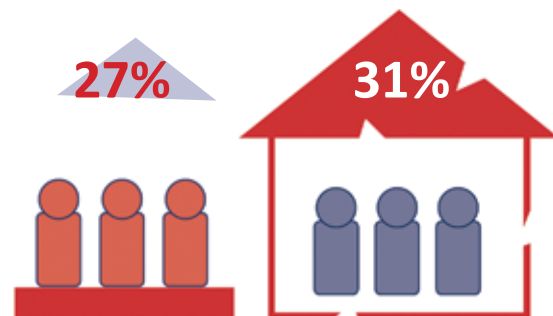
- Coordinate effort and action across the government and non-government sectors with the objective of ending homelessness;
- Ensure other services identify and refer clients at risk of homelessness;
- Prevent NSW Government agencies exiting any clients from care or custodial settings into homelessness; and
- Explore innovative housing and support solutions for highly vulnerable groups (including single older women).

The end goal

Coordinated planning and action, and an end to homelessness in NSW.

According to national research commissioned by the Mercy Foundation, the number of older women renting privately has risen by almost **50%** since the 2006 Census. Older women staying temporarily with others or in overcrowded housing has risen by **17%** over the same period.

At the time of the 2011 Census NSW had **28,190** people counted as homeless and a further **26,927** living in marginal housing.



This represented increases of **27%** and **31%** respectively since the 2006 Census.

People with disability need a voice in decisions that affect them



Recommendation

Ensure people with disability can access independent advocacy, information, and representation, through providing recurrent funds and growth.

What's the issue?

People with disability remain some of the most vulnerable and marginalised in our community, due to persistent barriers to social, educational and economic opportunities. To address these barriers, people with disability need to be actively involved in making decisions and developing solutions to the systemic issues they face. Independent advocacy, independent information and representative organisations support this by making sure that people with disability understand their options, can exercise their rights, and participate in government decisions.

Independent advocacy, independent information and representation contribute to better policy and practice by providing safeguards and early warnings to mitigate risks, improving access and inclusion of people with disability, and resolving complex issues across multiple agencies.

Current NSW Government funding agreements for independent advocacy, independent information and representative organisations conclude on 30 June 2015, with no certainty about a funding source beyond that. Without independent advocacy, information, and representation people with disability living in NSW risk exclusion.

The National Disability Strategy (NDS) identifies independent advocacy as a priority action. The need for ongoing consultation with people with disability and their representative organisations is prioritised in the NDS report to COAG 2012.

The action needed

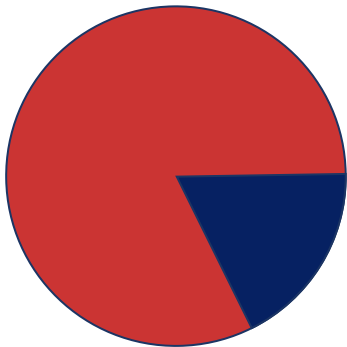
Due to all NSW disability funding being committed to the NDIS, the incoming NSW Government must commit to:

- Recurrent funding for independent advocacy, information and representation; and
- Growth funding, to ensure that independent advocacy, information and representation continues to meet the needs of people with disability in NSW.

The end goal

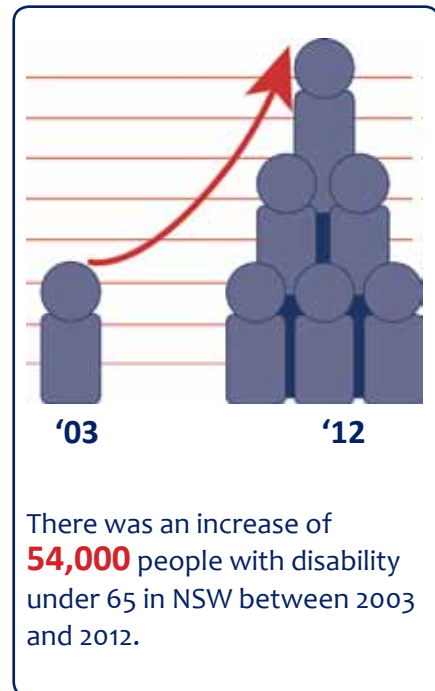
People with disability continue to receive independent advocacy, information and representation; have support to make choices for themselves, access support or deal with public agencies; and are able to exercise their human rights.

There are more than one million people in NSW with disability.



It is expected that **140,000** or **18%** of people in NSW will receive support funding under the NDIS.

There has been **no real growth**, besides CPI indexation, to advocacy, information or representation funding in NSW **since 2000.**



There was an increase of **54,000** people with disability under 65 in NSW between 2003 and 2012.

Violence against women must end



Recommendation

Renew the commitment to reducing violence against women.

What's the issue?

While violence against women is not a new phenomenon, the level of violence experienced by women today is truly shocking. Domestic and family violence and intimate partner violence are the most common forms of violence against women, and have significant individual and social costs – including increasing the risk of poverty and disadvantage. Women experiencing domestic violence are at a much higher risk of becoming homeless and are less likely to be financially independent or have access to safe alternative accommodation.

Violence against women also has a life-long effect on their children. Growing up in an environment where you are exposed to violence can profoundly impact the capacity for healthy future relationships, emotional wellbeing, education and engagement with work and community, and is also closely linked to inter-generational cycles of violence.

Exposure to domestic violence is a risk factor for homelessness, mental health problems and juvenile offending. It is also linked to inter-generational transmission of violence.

The action needed

Addressing violence against women in NSW will take coordination and action from all government agencies, and whole of government investment that matches the scale and severity of this issue. This action and investment must include a plan that ensures that:

- Violence against women is stopped before it occurs in the first place;
- Perpetrators are held to account for their actions;
- Community attitudes around gender equality and violence against women and their children are changed;
- Services and built and/or maintained that meet the needs of women and their children who have experienced violence; and
- The evidence base to inform the practice of all government and non-government agencies is built and improved.

The end goal

NSW women and their children live in safe communities, free from violence.

593 homicides in NSW were due to domestic violence between 2003 and 2013.



The cost of domestic and family violence to the Australian economy is estimated to have been **\$13.6 billion** in 2008-2009 and predicted to reach **\$15.6 billion** by 2021.

1 in 3 women in NSW have experienced **physical violence...**



...and **1 in 5** women have experienced **sexual violence** since the age of 15.

People with disability need choice and control over assistive technology

Recommendation

Improve choice and increase availability of, essential aids, equipment and assistive technology for people with disability.

What's the issue?

Equipment and assistive technology is essential for many people with disability to go about their daily lives, access education, employment and recreation, to develop and maintain relationships, and to participate in the community. There is considerable unmet need for equipment and assistive technology in NSW. Some people wait so long that the original prescription for a piece of equipment is out of date by the time they receive it.

People with disability continue to have little involvement in decisions about their equipment and assistive technology. Decisions therefore do not take into account the person's aspirations or the whole-of-life impact on the person. This can limit people's life opportunities and outcomes.

To improve outcomes from provision of aids and equipment, it is necessary to implement person centred approaches and shift choice and control over supports to people with disability.

In 2006 PriceWaterhouseCoopers estimated that base funding for aids and equipment of \$100 million was necessary to meet the level of need in NSW.

The action needed

Delivery of essential equipment and assistive technology must be improved by:

- Increasing involvement of people with disability, advocacy and representative organisations in planning, evaluation, and strategies for equipment provision;
- Offering personalised budgets in the EnableNSW Aids and Equipment Program. Anyone using Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) services must be able to amalgamate their EnableNSW funding and ADHC funding into a single personal budget under the Living Life My Way Framework;
- Reducing direct delivery of equipment and services, and moving to being a funding body only, to increase people's choice over their supports;
- Abolishing co-payments; and
- Increasing growth funding for the Aids and Equipment Program under Enable NSW.

The end goal

People with disability have certainty about provision of the equipment and assistive technology they need to go about their daily lives, and are actively involved in any decision about what, how, why, when, where and by whom equipment and assistive technology is provided.

680,300 people

in NSW (50% of people with disability) used aids or equipment in 2012.



66% of EnableNSW clients are **over 65** and will therefore **not be eligible for the NDIS**.

These people will continue to rely on **EnableNSW's Aids and Equipment Program** for their supports.

People with mental ill health want support in their own communities



Recommendation

Grow the provision of integrated mental health care and support in the community to improve outcomes for people living with mental health conditions their families and carers.

What's the issue?

People experiencing mental ill health frequently experience difficulty accessing appropriate services unless they are considered acutely unwell and in crisis. In NSW, mental health services are primarily focused on hospital-based care rather than early intervention and keeping people well in the community. The crisis focus, a lack of resources and fragmentation means there are insufficient supports across the continuum of care to meet people's needs, and many people cycle in and out of hospital due to lack of appropriate services and support in the community.

Mental health consumers say they want services that support their recovery journey and assist them to live contributing lives in their own community. The NSW Mental Health Commission's draft Strategic Plan and the NSW Partnerships for Health funding reforms provide an opportunity to fundamentally re-shape the current system to one which delivers recovery-orientated, community-based services and programs.

Mental illness is the third most common health condition in terms of the burden of disease, and is closely associated with other health problems and socio-economic disadvantage, including homelessness, unemployment, and poverty.

The action needed

The mental health system must be reorientated from crisis management in acute care settings to focus on early intervention and appropriate care in community settings. This will mean:

- Increased mental health expenditure to better reflect the burden of disease;
- Progressive growth in investment in community supports provided by the public and community-managed mental health sectors; and
- Improved accountability by Local Hospital Districts, through public reporting on actual spending on mental health services and levels of service provision.

The end goal

Increased access to timely and appropriate mental health services and support for people living with mental health conditions, their families and carers; leading to improved well-being for people living with mental health conditions.

There are at least **one million** people living with a mental health condition NSW, yet **only one-third** receive assistance



In 2010-11, NSW had the **second lowest per capita spending** on mental health, and the **lowest proportion** of community-managed mental health funding of any state or territory.

All children in NSW should have a great start in life

Recommendation

Increase investment in children and families to ensure that all children have a great start in life.

What's the issue?

A great start in life is critical for every child's future success. Universal access to early childhood education and targeted support for vulnerable families is essential to build the potential of all children and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Unfortunately, we know that too many children in NSW still fall through the cracks, and early childhood education remains unaffordable for many families. Despite recent progress and investment, not all children can access early childhood education in the two years before school, and NSW families face some of the highest fees in the country. We also know that too many children are in out of home care and Aboriginal children are overrepresented in the statutory child protection system.

The action needed

Investing in children and families is essential to ensure that every child has a great start in life. The Departments of Family

Children who attend preschool or a pre-year program have (on average) higher overall development, learning, cognitive and social-emotional outcomes than those who don't.

and Community Services and Education need to coordinate and plan together with the community sector for an investment that ensures:

- All children are able to access early childhood education in the two years before school;
- Low income and at risk children can access free early childhood education;
- Additional support is provided to early childhood education for children with developmental delays and complex needs;
- Regional and remote children's services are sustainable, via increased funding;
- Continued support and evaluation for prevention and early intervention programs that divert at risk children from the statutory child protection system; and
- Growth in the proportion of the child protection budget for prevention and early intervention programs for children and families occurs, with an increase in funding to programs targeted at Aboriginal children and families.

The end goal

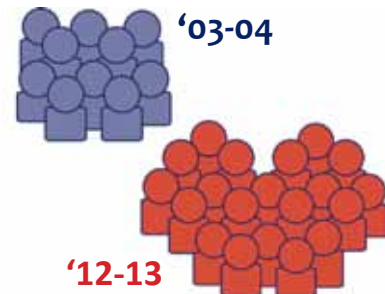
All children in New South Wales should have a great start in life, that includes access to affordable early childhood education that meets their needs and support for their family to keep them out of the statutory child protection system and ensure they build their potential.



NSW families face **higher average costs** for preschool after subsidies than any other state.

In 2012-13, Aboriginal children in NSW were **more likely** to be placed in out of home care than in any other state or territory; and more than **9%** of Aboriginal children had at least one out of home care placement.

More than **20,000** children had at least one out of home care placement in 2012-13 – **twice as many** as in 2003-04.



Transport should no longer be a barrier to access health care

Recommendation

Remove transport as a barrier to accessing health services by properly resourcing community transport providers and developing a coordinated and consistent approach for responding to people in need of transport assistance.

What's the issue?

Too many people cannot access timely and appropriate health care due to a lack of transport. NSW Health provides travel subsidies to people who use public or private transport and travel long distances in order to access treatment, but those with limited transport options often fall through the gaps. And while community transport attempts to fill these gaps, it is not properly funded for the share of the health transport task it performs.

Problems accessing health care contribute to greater inequity in health outcomes, with the people most likely to experience difficulty travelling to treatment those already experiencing socioeconomic and health disadvantage.

“NSW Health provides travel subsidies to people who use public or private transport and travel long distances in order to access treatment, but those with limited transport options often fall through the gaps.”

The action needed

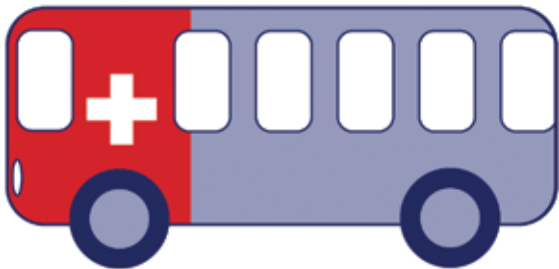
To ensure transport is not a barrier to accessing health care in NSW, we need:

- An immediate increase in funding to community transport providers to meet the growing need for non-emergency health transport services;
- A needs assessment for all health transport services undertaken by NSW Health;
- A review of the delivery of non-emergency health transport in NSW, including community transport providers. This review should consider the potential benefits gained by outsourcing health transport services for ambulant patients to a properly resourced community transport sector; and
- A reform plan for non-emergency health transport that delivers a coordinated, integrated system at the Local Health District level and a consistent approach for responding to people in need of transport assistance.

The end goal

A health transport system that provides easily accessible assistance to all people experiencing transport disadvantage without impinging on community transport's capacity to deliver transport services for purposes other than health.

Almost **one third of community transport trips** are for health purposes, but NSW Health provides only **3%** of community transport funding.



Community transport provides more than **798,000 trips** for health related purposes each year.

Aboriginal communities and organisations should shape their own future

Recommendation

Work in partnership with Aboriginal communities, organisations and peoples when developing policy, programs and services to address disadvantage among Aboriginal people in NSW.

What's the issue?

Aboriginal peoples are the first inhabitants of, and custodians of, the oldest living cultures in NSW. Today, around 170,000 Aboriginal people live here – more than any other state. Aboriginal community controlled organisations and peaks have a strong and vibrant history of advocating for the rights and interests of Aboriginal people, and delivering services to Aboriginal people that meet their needs and are culturally appropriate. Despite this history, decision makers often ignore the wisdom of those organisations when making policy, despite the fact that

Aboriginal people and representative organisations are best placed to shape the policy, programs and services that are relevant to their communities and peoples.

There are more than 200 Aboriginal community controlled and representative organisations in NSW that deliver services to and with Aboriginal people in areas as diverse as advocacy and rights, health, education, law and justice and child protection.

The action needed

In order to reduce disadvantage and poverty among Aboriginal peoples and communities; government and other service providers must:

- Commit to the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples in program design and policy development;
- Seek, respect and value the skills, expertise and knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and communities; and work in partnership with the strong, existing network of Aboriginal community controlled and representative organisations and peaks when developing government policies, programs and services;
- Work in partnership with community controlled organisations to develop meaningful service KPIs that reflect culturally appropriate and holistic service delivery;
- Ensure procurement processes and funding models are built to support the development of Aboriginal community controlled organisations; and
- Require all service providers to ensure cultural safety for clients and staff via their KPIs and funding contracts.

The end goal

Services to Aboriginal people are self-determined, culturally appropriate and meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples and communities.

The **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** commits signatories to (among other things) “... consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.”



Regional communities and community organisations need support

Recommendation

Resource a regional support NGO network to ensure a viable community sector across NSW.

What's the issue?

As the NSW Government extends its delivery of human services by NGOs, there is a need to continue to build the capacity and “know how” of the NGO sector to strengthen its capacity to deliver high quality services to people experiencing poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation, and ensure government funds are invested well. A regional support structure that acts as an information hub, delivers advice and resources and supports NGOs to adapt is critical to enable organisations and communities address common challenges, strengthen their communities and continuously improve their services. A network of Regional Support NGOs currently exists however it is unevenly resourced and spread across the State, and in some regions no support exists at all.

“A network of Regional Support NGOs currently exists however it is unevenly resourced and spread across the State, and in some regions no support exists at all.”

An NGO Regional Support Program would:

- enhance the capacity of those organisations currently providing some support;
- provide resources in those regions currently lacking such an organisation; and
- provide government with a distribution network for initiatives, capacity building and a closer relationship with local communities.

The action needed

To ensure that community organisations in all regions in NSW are well supported by a regional support program it is important that:

- Consultation occur with community sector NGOs to develop a plan for the creation of independent regional support NGOs where none currently exist;
- Existing regional support NGOs are strengthened to enhance the capacity of their local NGOs and communities; and
- Every region is allocated appropriate funding to support a regional support NGO, based on population and need.

The end goal

A well resourced regional network would strengthen communities, increase their capacity to participate in decision making on government policy, services and projects, improve service delivery and deliver a more equitable and just society.

Currently Hunter, New England, Central West, Orana Far West, Riverina, Albury-Wodonga, Far South Coast and Southern Tablelands/ Monaro are **not part of the regional support network**.



A regional support NGO networks **aligns** with the NSW Government's State Plan, **NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One** ***“Involve the community*** *in decision making on government policy, services and projects.”* (Goal 32)

Everyone can participate in decision making that affects them

Recommendation

Develop a NSW Community Participation Strategy to improve the way people and communities have a say in government policy processes and decision-making.

What's the issue?

Everyone should have equal opportunities to be involved in and influence decisions that affect them. Participation improves public service effectiveness, increases democratic legitimacy and accountability, strengthens individual capacity, and builds social capital.

There is no overarching framework for public participation in NSW. While there have been positive initiatives designed to give people more say, avenues for community participation in state governance or strategic policy remain limited. Previous independent reviews have noted considerable variation in the extent and quality of practice across government agencies. Critically, not everyone has equal opportunities to participate and many groups remain under-represented – particularly the most vulnerable, including people experiencing poverty.

Community engagement strategies are a statutory obligation for NSW local councils (s402, *Local Government Act*).

Giving the community a real say requires robust legal, policy and institutional frameworks, along with appropriate tools, resourcing and political commitment. Other states have recognised the need for consistent, whole-of-government approaches to public participation and engagement, such as **South Australia Better Together** (2013) and Tasmania's **Framework for Community Engagement** (2013).

The action needed

A NSW community participation strategy is needed to provide a political mandate and framework to drive consistent, quality practice across government. The strategy should include:

- An independent Community Engagement Board;
- Seed funding for demonstration projects to show high quality engagement in action;
- Sustained mechanisms for public participation in governance and strategic policy; and
- A skills development training program for government and community sector so that policymakers can improve participation practice by government and NGOs.

The end goal

Improved opportunities for people and organisations (particularly those who have historically been marginalised) to have a say and influence NSW public policy and decision-making, and public policy and decision-making that takes into account the views of marginalised people.

Certain groups tend to be **under-represented or excluded** from participating in public policy processes. **This includes** people experiencing poverty, people in rural areas, children and young people, women, Aboriginal people, people from culturally, religious and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTI people and people with disability.



Only **60%** of people in NSW currently feel they are able to have a say on **issues that are important** to them.

Funding for NSW community organisations should be fair and efficient

Recommendation

Develop and implement a fair, efficient, evidence-based sector funding policy.

What's the issue?

A flourishing and effective not-for-profit community sector is fundamental to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people in NSW, and appropriate government funding is critical to the delivery of these services. Despite recent reforms, a majority of community sector NGOs remain concerned by the complexity of application and funding processes and the adequacy of funding to cover the full costs of service delivery (including organisational costs).

We know from the Productivity Commission's review of the contribution of the not for profit sector that "... the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery of services by not-for-profits on behalf of governments is adversely affected by inadequate contracting processes. These include overly prescriptive requirements, increased micro-management, requirements to return surplus funds, and inappropriately short-term contracts." (2010) We also know that building on past and recent reforms and developing good funding policy and practices could significantly improve outcomes for the people and communities of NSW, and assist government to achieve its social policy objectives. Of course, it would also strengthen non-government organisations and build their capacity to deliver high quality services to meet community needs.

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The action needed

An improved system for funding community sector non-government organisations must:

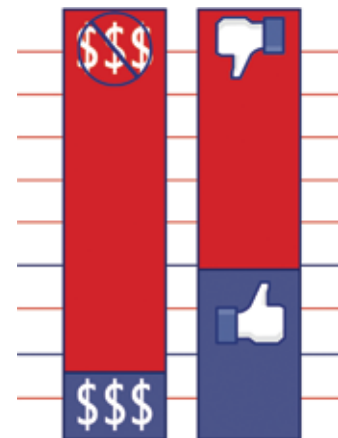
- Fund the full cost of service delivery;
- Recognise the wider community benefit or ‘spill over’ effects that community sector organisations contribute, such as social capital and inclusion;
- Include procurement practices that are flexible, guarantee the sector’s independence, include outcomes-based service specifications and longer-term funding contracts; and
- Streamline monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure they are useful and proportional to the size and risk of the funding.

The end goal

An effective funding policy framework that supports and enhances the contribution of the sector to the economic, social and cultural life of the state, and improves the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable people.

Non-government, not for profit community sector organisations deliver a range of services, support and advocacy for people experiencing poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation **across NSW.**

In the recent SPRC survey only **15.8%** of community organisations felt funding models were **sustainable** all or most of the time and only **39.9%** believed the funding they receive covered overheads all or most of the time.



Notes





Poverty affects nearly 900,000 people in New South Wales – more than in any other state or territory. The rate of poverty in NSW is also among the highest in Australia at 14.8%. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of people living in poverty in NSW, a further 7% are near, or at risk of poverty. Here in NSW, our cost of living – particularly the cost of housing – mean that our family, our friends or indeed any one of us is just one step away from poverty or disadvantage.

As we approach the 2015 NSW Election, NCOSS wants to see everyone speak about the issue of poverty and disadvantage in our state, plan for a fairer NSW and act to address poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation. This Election Platform provides an agenda to start that discussion.

One Step Away is based around four themes that have shape the development of 13 specific proposals for action to reduce poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation including:

- **Bridging the divide to reduce inequality**
- **Ensuring everyone has access to universal services**
- **Planning so that communities flourish**
- **A fair say in decision making**

The recommendations in this platform provide a roadmap to improve the wellbeing, resilience and opportunities for people experiencing poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation, and if adopted, will contribute to building a stronger, fairer state. It is time for us all to **Speak, Plan and Act** to end poverty and disadvantage in NSW.

