

ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020



About NCOSS

The NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) is the peak body for the community sector in NSW. With over 400 members and a wider network of organisations and individuals who share our values, we work to alleviate poverty and disadvantage in NSW.

We advocate, collaborate and connect, as an independent public voice, to build inclusive communities where everyone can thrive, supported by a strong, diverse and effective community sector.

We act ethically and transparently to be an independent public voice on issues concerning poverty and disadvantage.

Our work is driven by the experiences of people affected by poverty and disadvantage and the community organisations who support them.

We take an evidence-informed, consultative and collaborative approach to develop credible solutions that strengthen communities and support the sector.

We partner with diverse communities and stakeholders, including government, the private sector and others to maximise impact and achieve results.

We honour and respect that Aboriginal peoples sovereignty has never been ceded, that Aboriginal people continue to experience extreme disadvantage and injustice, that self-determination must be at the heart of their connection to culture and heritage and that their connection to the land and water is vital to their wellbeing.

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We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the country on which we work. We pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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President's Message

As the President of NCOSS, I'm proud to be a part of a sector that has played such a critical role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of NSW communities, and especially our most vulnerable members, during the events of 2019-20. I am also proud of the work NCOSS has done supporting the sector, collaborating with the NSW Government and advocating for those doing it tough during these challenging times.

The impacts of the COVID-19 economic downturn will be long lasting and severe. Already, disadvantaged groups are at risk of their circumstances becoming entrenched, while new cohorts will experience disadvantage for the first time. This will place enormous pressure on frontline community service organisations, already grappling with resources stretched to capacity and a drop-off in revenue streams.

In the face of such uncertainty, having strong, responsive and supportive peak bodies to represent the interests of the sector is essential. The enormous efforts of the NCOSS team and the results delivered throughout 2019-20 speak for themselves. The underlying theme has been one of partnership – with other peak bodies, member organisations, government, academic institutions and other experts – to maximise impact and make a difference to the lives of our communities throughout NSW.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of long-standing Board members who retired at the 2019 AGM; Ben Carblis, Suellen McCaffrey, Eamon Waterford and of course, Tony Davies, our former President. I would also like to acknowledge the new Directors that have joined over the last 12 months and who have made an immediate contribution. The leadership shown by the Board in 2019-20 has been vital to the work of the organisation.

As this Annual Report shows, the small but highly motivated NCOSS team, under the leadership of our CEO, Joanna Quilty, has delivered above and beyond over the past year.



David Fisher
President



CEO's Message

As for many in the community sector, 2019-20 has been a year like no other. It has tested our responsiveness and served to illuminate the disparity between our broad remit and slender resources. But as has been the case for so many of our member organisations, the NCOSS team has risen to the challenge and delivered.

Whether it be our online centralised resource hubs providing easy access to information, advice and practical tools; our adaptation of research and advocacy products to leverage unplanned external events and ensure relevance; our role as a conduit between government and the sector; or the collaboration with fellow peaks to put the spotlight firmly on increased investment in social housing – NCOSS has seized the opportunity, brought issues impacting vulnerable groups to the fore and demonstrated our willingness to work with government to find solutions.

We have also worked with our members, fellow peaks and other partners to position the sector as a provider of essential frontline services and a key player in NSW's social and economic recovery. Community organisations provide vital and timely support for those doing it tough; and by getting people back on their feet before problems become entrenched, we also contribute to the productive capacity of our economy.

There are many challenges ahead. The pandemic has depleted our balance sheet and means that business as usual is not an option. The impacts of the recession will be long and hard, especially for already disadvantaged groups and locations. But with the support of a united and engaged Board, a talented NCOSS team, and a sector that has proven its resolve, we will continue to strive for a NSW where everyone has the opportunity – and support – to live a good life.



Joanna Quilty
Chief Executive Officer

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

July



A trip to Hunter and New England regions provides an opportunity to hear how drought, cost of living and the economic downturn are impacting communities and stretching frontline services.

It highlights concerns that regional needs can be overlooked by decision makers – sparking the idea of bringing regional voices to NSW Parliament House (see October).

Following the 2019-20 State budget, we commence advocating for increased indexation and coordinate follow-up questions from the sector to elicit more detailed information on expenditure for key programs.

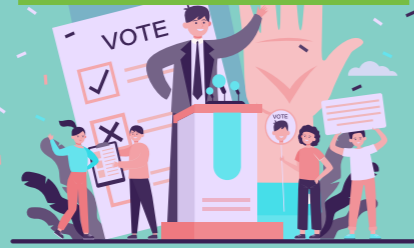
August



The NCOSS Board adopts its 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, following consultation and public display.

In partnership with fellow peak Fams, the Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) Outcomes Measurement roadshow kicks off in Dubbo. It goes on to deliver support to almost 500 participants through 30 workshops in as many locations. Along with provision of one-on-one support for 54 organisations, this provides youth services, neighbourhood centres, family support services and others with assistance to clarify purpose, measure outcomes and demonstrate impact in preparation for new funding agreements.

September



Abortion decriminalisation legislation is passed by the NSW Parliament, with advocacy by key women's groups, MPs, NCOSS and others influencing this historic outcome.

NCOSS advocacy on inadequate community sector indexation and onerous contractual terms also gets some traction: indexation is raised from 1.75% to 2% and 9 out of our 10 Human Service Agreement asks are accepted.

October



We launch our Mapping Economic Disadvantage in NSW report and accompanying interactive maps, highlighting poverty rates for different locations and demographic groups across the state. We also host our Putting Regional Needs on the Map event at NSW Parliament House at which Deputy Premier, The Hon John Barilaro MP, backs in Raising the Rate of NewStart.

Our CEO, Joanna Quilty, is a witness at the public hearing for the ICAC Inquiry into the Regulation of Lobbying, Access and Influence in NSW. She explains how the community sector is not involved in lobbying, but is a voice for people who don't have access to the corridors of power.

November



The NCOSS AGM hears from Reverend Tim Costello on the need for gambling reform in NSW, and we farewell four long serving Board members and welcome four new Directors.

A trip to the Central West is an opportunity to understand challenges and the resourcefulness of local community organisations in the face of growing disadvantage and diminishing resources.

We appear at the National Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health, emphasising the role of locally based NGOs in providing practical support, connection and engagement, with flow-on wellbeing benefits. We advise the NSW Productivity Commission on the economic contribution and untapped jobs potential of our sector.

December



The bushfire crisis that commenced in September intensifies, threatening homes and lives in regional and metropolitan communities alike.

We release our Pre-Budget Statement, focused on easing cost of living pressures, creating economic opportunities and valuing essential community services.

January



Bushfires command our resources and attention.

We develop an online resource to provide community organisations with a one-stop-shop for information on assistance available for fire impacted communities. We convene a working group of members involved in response and recovery efforts to share information and experiences.

We participate in ACOSS led advocacy on issues of national significance.

February



We finalise work with NATSEM to overlay our NSW poverty maps with bushfire locations and release the Mapping Economic Disadvantage in Fire Affected Communities report.

We get confirmation from the Department of Communities and Justice and NSW Health that hard-won equal remuneration supplementary payments – introduced in 2012 with the aim of closing the gender pay gap – will be rolled into baseline funding when supplementation ends in 2021. National advocacy efforts led by ACOSS, to get a similar commitment in relation to federally funded programs, continue.

March



Following a visit to fire affected communities on the South Coast, the full impact of COVID-19 hits and forces NSW into lockdown.

As businesses close and snaking unemployment queues appear outside Centrelink offices, NCOSS goes remote. We step up support for the sector through our centralised COVID-19 resource hub; joint weekly videos with DCJ providing updates on evolving issues; and advocating with fellow peaks – with some success – for urgent action to protect the most vulnerable and enable flexible responses from the sector to keep communities, clients and staff safe and supported.

April



We launch The Cost of Staying Connected and Austerity hits Home, both of which report on the results of our 2019 Cost of Living survey and highlight the digital divide and the impact of housing costs on weekly budgets. The accompanying Cost of Living: COVID-19 Supplementary Paper argues that the pandemic will exacerbate these issues and recommends boosting social and affordable housing, enhancing protections for renters, supporting communities impacted by disasters, and fostering greater recognition and expansion of the social services industry.

The introduction of the JobSeeker supplement brings long overdue, temporary relief for households previously below the poverty line; and informs our advocacy on permanently raising the rate.

May



NCOSS and a coalition of peak bodies engage Equity Economics to model the job creation potential of investing in social and affordable housing. The report, Supporting Economic Recovery in NSW, estimates building an additional 5,000 units will create 18,000 jobs in NSW's residential construction sector with flow-on benefits for local businesses. The research gains us a meeting with NSW Treasurer The Hon Dominic Perrottet MP, senior Ministers, bureaucrats and other MPs.

NCOSS commissions NATSEM to commence work exploring the relationship between economic disadvantage and access to essential GP, dental and specialist health services in NSW.

June



Our Leading in Crisis Recovery seminar series gets underway.

We publish Stories of Change and Good Practice, online resources to assist NGOs explore options for future sustainability and growth. Our review of the NCOSS role in the ClubGRANTS Local Committee process, funded via a grant from the Office of Responsible Gambling, kicks off.

This was a year in two parts for our policy and advocacy work, requiring us to demonstrate flexibility and agility as we adapted to the changing environment. We began 2019-20 progressing our strategic priorities – consolidating and building the evidence base to support our advocacy for people in poverty and disadvantage across NSW. The release of our *Mapping Economic Disadvantage in NSW* report was an opportunity to highlight regional disparities. By the end of 2019 this took on new meaning, as we re-analysed the data to highlight disadvantage in fire affected communities.

As the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic became clear, we partnered with other COSSes, NGOs, businesses and community leaders across the country to call for a permanent increase in income support. Our cost of living survey results revealed a digital divide. We used these findings to call for better access to technology for families in need, to help them home-school during lockdown. The results also spoke to the ongoing housing crisis in NSW, with the need for increased investment and job creation potential reinforced by economic modelling provided by Equity Economics.

The NCOSS Pre-Budget Submission (PBS) became a living document. Initially distributed in December 2019, COVID-19 required us to revisit priorities. We commenced work on an updated PBS for release prior to the delayed NSW Budget.

In the midst of this activity, our commitment to business as usual – contributing to the development of sound public policy in NSW – was demonstrated by 18 submissions to inquiries, appearances at public hearings such as the ICAC's Operation Eclipse and the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health, as well as our ongoing advocacy work with our members and partners.

Mapping Economic Disadvantage in NSW

In October 2019 NCOSS launched the [Mapping Economic Disadvantage in NSW](#) report and accompanying interactive maps. Developed by NATSEM, these highlight the extent of poverty – by different demographic groups and small area location – across NSW. They continue to provide a practical resource for NGOs, local councils and other levels of government to assist with setting priorities, service planning, and allocating resources to meet community need. The report generated extensive media and public interest, particularly in regional areas of NSW, allowing NCOSS members to talk about local issues and advocate for their communities.

Putting Regional Needs on the Map

NCOSS held the *Putting Regional Needs on the Map* event at Parliament House on 24 October 2019. This Anti-Poverty Week event brought together a broad coalition of voices and key decision makers to highlight the impacts of poverty and disadvantage in regional communities. With over 140 people in attendance, keynote speaker and journalist, Gabrielle Chan, was joined by leaders from community organisations, Local Government NSW, Country Women's Association NSW and the Small Business Association of Australia. We also heard from Deputy Premier, The Hon John Barilaro MP, and Deputy Opposition Leader, The Hon Yasmin Catley MP, with the Deputy Premier announcing his support for raising the rate of NewStart.



Report into NSW Disability Advocacy and Information Organisations

October 2019 also marked the report of our findings from research into the experience of disability advocacy and information organisations since the end of block funding and the rollout of the NDIS. It highlighted:

- The increased demand for disability advocacy supports in NSW to help access mainstream services and navigate the NDIS.
- The barriers to becoming an NDIS provider as a means of ensuring ongoing sustainability.
- The significant uncertainty for organisations and the people they support.

The report was provided to the Ageing and Disability Commissioner to inform his *Review of Disability Advocacy Organisations*, in which NCOSS participated.

NCOSS Pre-Budget Submission (PBS) 2019-20

NCOSS developed its annual PBS, in consultation with members and other stakeholders. We provided key government and parliamentary representatives an advance copy in December 2019, which focused on addressing cost of living for households under pressure; creating economic opportunities for disadvantaged communities; and supporting and valuing essential community services. As COVID-19 and the economic downturn took hold, we realised the need to revisit and update these priorities, in the context of rising unemployment and growing disadvantage.

Mapping Economic Disadvantage in Fire Affected Communities

In March 2020, NCOSS worked with NATSEM to update our 'economic disadvantage' interactive maps, overlaying them with bushfire locational information. This was accompanied by a short report profiling five bushfire-affected areas. This new analysis [Mapping Economic Disadvantage in Fire Affected Communities](#) showed that the areas hardest hit by the 2019-20 bushfires were areas already experiencing high levels of disadvantage.

Cost of Living in NSW releases

In April 2020 we released two reports from our Cost of Living in NSW Survey, completed by 730 people on low and low-to-moderate incomes across NSW during May 2019. The first report, [The Cost of Staying Connected](#), highlighted that many participating households struggle to afford equipment and other costs associated with digital technology.

[The Cost of Living in NSW: Austerity Hits Home](#) report showed that housing costs were the 'black hole' in weekly budgets. Households with children reported the highest rates of housing stress and many people resorted to extreme measures to manage cost of living pressures.

This second report was accompanied by a [COVID-19 Supplementary Paper](#), which outlined recommendations to address cost of living pressures, exacerbated by the pandemic, and create jobs.

It called on the NSW Government to:

- Stimulate economic activity and address the housing crisis by boosting the supply of social and affordable housing, expanding the maintenance program for existing stock and enhancing protections for tenants.
- Establish a Resilient Communities - Support and Connect fund to enable community organisations in areas affected by multiple disasters to respond to increased demand and build community resilience.
- Work with NCOSS and others to create a NSW Institute for the Social Services Industry (NISSI) to bolster opportunities, job creation and strategic development in the social services industry.

Supporting people experiencing financial hardship to avoid homelessness

We completed a project funded by DCJ under the NSW Government's Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 Focus Area 1: *Prevention and Early Intervention to improve supports for people who are experiencing financial hardship to maintain their tenancies and avoid homelessness.*

Phase one of the project involved working with Service NSW to increase community sector awareness of products and supports available through Service NSW Cost of Living program. It also included collection and analysis of data for the *Report on Telecommunication Bill Stress in Low-Income Households* (released in early 2020).

Phase two of the project focussed on short-term loans and other related financial products and included exploratory work on the relationship between gambling and homelessness. Deliverables included a report to DCJ into short term loans/credit contracts and people at risk of homelessness and a rapid evidence review on the links between short-term loans, problem gambling and homelessness. The learnings and relationships established during this project will be integrated into ongoing policy and advocacy work.

Supporting Economic Recovery in NSW

NCOSS and NSW housing peaks commissioned modelling from Equity Economics that provided evidence for investing in a social and affordable housing-led recovery for NSW. The report, [*Supporting Economic Recovery in NSW*](#), was released on 14 May 2020. The modelling supports investment in social and affordable housing as a key element of NSW's recovery to grow jobs, assist small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and look after the most vulnerable. The report generated significant interest and led to meetings with the NSW Treasurer, Ministers for Families, Communities and Disability Services and Housing, other MPs, key bureaucrats and business leaders.



The community sector has faced a year like no other. As well as the usual battles for adequate indexation, funding certainty and longer-term contracts, organisations were faced with the challenges of rising demand, the need for more crisis intervention, and adapting operations during the COVID-19 lockdown. Having underscored our sector's critical frontline role in the provision of essential services, there have been some considerable successes in the year.

NCOSS has worked to support its members through these times by advocating on key industry issues, acting as a conduit between government and the sector, serving as a one-stop-shop for information and resources, and providing access to training, development and peer support opportunities. Central to this has been getting out into the community, listening to our members, and understanding the issues they face and the support they require to do their jobs.

Advocacy wins on industry issues

Our progress during 2019-20 has included:

- Increased indexation for 'FACS-funded' organisations from the 1.75% allocated in the 2019-20 budget to 2%.
- Commitment from the Department of Communities & Justice and NSW Health that Equal Remuneration Order supplementary payments – introduced in 2012 following strong advocacy by unions and the sector to achieve pay equity for our largely female workforce – will be incorporated into baseline funding once supplementation ceases in 2021.
- Inclusion of 9 from 10 requested amendments to the standard terms of the Human Services Agreement (HSA) and commitment to a comprehensive review in 2021.
- Commitment from DCJ for flexibility with contract requirements during COVID-19, including reduced reporting, use of underspends and recontracting processes.



Sector Engagement and support

As a peak body, engaging with our diverse membership across the state to understand the different operating environments, challenges and opportunities is essential. This year, NCOSS travelled to regional NSW to meet with local service providers, MPs and other community representatives in the Hunter Valley, New England, the Central West, Illawarra, Shoalhaven and the South Coast, before COVID-19 lockdowns intervened.

We also used established forums, social media and other communication channels to connect with members. When face-to-face meetings and travel were no longer possible, these mechanisms took on greater importance and we adapted to ensure that the sector could still come together, access up-to-date information, hear from experts and raise issues and concerns.

We published our fortnightly editions of our NCOSS eNews, reaching members and a wider network of approximately 4,000 subscribers to provide access to research, resources and the latest sector news. We also commenced a fortnightly COVID-19 specific e-newsletter during April to June 2020.

To further enable information exchange and discussion of emerging issues, NCOSS also convened meetings of the Forum of Non-Government Agencies, Health Equity Alliance and Regional Forums. These forums provided the opportunity to hear from diverse experts including:

- Human Rights Commissioner, Edward Santow
- Ageing and Disability Commissioner, Robert Fitzgerald
- Director of Health Protection at NSW Health, Dr Jeremy McAnulty
- Deputy Secretary of the Department of Communities and Justice, Simone Walker
- Associate Professor of the School of Public Health University of Sydney, Peter Sainsbury
- Social Ventures Australia CEO, Susie Riddell

Responding to the bushfires in NSW

While COVID-19 may have dimmed memories of the horrific bushfire season of 2019-20 for some, for those who lived through it, it is something they will never forget. NCOSS played a key role in supporting member organisations in communities impacted by the fires that burnt large areas of the state, and in advocating for people who lost homes, livelihoods and so much more. Work included:

- Developing a dynamic online [Bushfire Relief Assistance resource](#) to direct NGOs and local community organisations to assistance available for people in fire impacted communities, such as financial assistance, housing, insurance, legal assistance and mental health services.
- Recommending to the NSW Premier, Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and Minister for Emergency Services the establishment of a Recovery Taskforce with community sector representation.
- Coordinating a Bushfire Community Regeneration Working Group, involving community sector representatives sharing information and experiences, identifying opportunities for improved coordination and advocating for a ground-up approach to recovery.

- Meetings with Assistant Commissioner, Mick Willing from the NSW Bushfire Recovery Office, representatives of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, and the CEO of Resilience NSW, Shane Fitzsimmons, to highlight impacts for vulnerable groups, the important but under-valued role of local community organisations and relevant NCOSS resources.
- Participating in the ACOSS-led national bushfire sector forums to exchange information and undertake coordinated advocacy for practical solutions and greater recognition of the sector's role.

Supporting the sector to respond and recalibrate under COVID-19

Like the rest of the sector, NCOSS needed to respond quickly to the disruption and challenges caused by COVID-19 to support our members providing essential, frontline services. The initial stages of the pandemic saw much confusion, a lack of clear information and a growing awareness that impacts were not being felt evenly. Along with other peak bodies, NCOSS stepped up its advocacy, leadership and coordination roles to ensure that the sector was appropriately supported and clients, communities and staff kept safe. This included:

- Developing the [COVID-19 Community Sector Resource](#) on the NCOSS website as a central place for relevant information including health and WHS advice, resources to assist with contingency and COVID-19 safety planning, and examples of good practice and innovative responses to ensure service continuity while meeting health and safety requirements.
- Publishing COVID-19 specific e-newsletters during the height of the pandemic (April to June 2020) and on alternate weeks to our regular NCOSS eNews. These updates were in response to requests from members for more information on the implications of the public health-led response for community organisations and the evolving situation.
- Working with DCJ to provide joint weekly communications to the sector. NCOSS CEO, Joanna Quilty, joined DCJ Deputy Secretary, Simone Walker, [in eight videos during 2019-20](#), providing an opportunity to raise emerging issues, put questions for clarification, and identify the need for further information and investigation.
- Convening weekly meetings of peak bodies to share information, identify emerging themes and coordinate messaging and efforts.
- Together with other peak bodies, acting as a conduit between the NSW Government and the sector to highlight gaps or inconsistencies in the health-led response and impacts for vulnerable cohorts. This contributed to better targeted responses, developed through collaborative efforts, for rough sleepers, social housing tenants, people in the private rental market, young people at risk of educational disengagement and others.
- Participating in NSW Health's NGO Community of Practice on COVID-19, enabling information and resources to be shared with the broader sector and more consistent, cross-government responses.

NCOSS TEI Sector Assistance Strategy 2019-20

NCOSS has continued to deliver the [Targeted Early Intervention \(TEI\) Sector Assistance Strategy](#), coordinating individualised support to organisations, facilitating peer learning sessions and partnering with fellow peak, Fams, to deliver workshops state-wide.

The TEI program aims to deliver flexible community-led support to children, young people, families and communities experiencing, or at risk of vulnerability. The Sector Assistance Strategy is supporting organisations funded through the program – including youth services, neighbourhood centres and family support services – to implement the TEI outcomes framework, articulate their program logic, demonstrate impact and capture data to support this.

To this end, we worked with Fams to deliver 30 workshops to almost 500 participants across NSW; we brokered more intensive individualised support for 54 organisations from industry consultants who between them provided 560 hours of assistance, and; we held 5 peer learning sessions to share experiences and identify emerging themes.

Our work, along with that of other peaks, has contributed to more than 500 services navigating additional requirements and changing their practices and/or service delivery to transition to new contracts under the TEI program. As at 1 July 2020, 678 contracts were finalised – 72% of which have 5 year terms providing greater funding certainty.

Stories of Organisational Change and Good Practice

Using story-telling as the tool, NCOSS engaged with industry leaders to create a suite of mixed-media resources to support the sector approach to organisational change and consider new opportunities. These resources present case studies and examples of innovative solutions that organisations have adopted to remain sustainable and grow their impact during changing and uncertain times.

- **Stories of Organisational Change** present case studies of organisations who embarked on a journey spanning the 'MOU to Mergers' continuum in response to a changing funding environment.
- **Stories of Good Practice** cite new practices that are emerging – for example in relation to peer support and strengthening informal partnerships - in order to 'do things better' in changing environments.

All resources can be found on the [NCOSS Stories of Organisational Change & Good Practice](#) webpage.

The important role of NGO advocacy in contributing to sound public policy

“Unlike for-profit lobbyists, NGOs act as a conduit for information and voices from the public that often go unheard... NGO advocacy is also often informed by the expertise of service providers, research and evidence and expert opinion.” Joanna Quilty, NCOSS CEO

In October 2019, ICAC conducted public hearings as part of its Inquiry into the Regulation of Lobbying, Access and Influence in NSW. NCOSS CEO, Joanna Quilty, appeared as a witness to put the case that NGO advocacy differs from the role of lobbyists representing for-profit interests, in that it is aimed at influencing government decision making in the public interest; and ensuring that the voices of those least heard are taken into consideration.



Enhancing the capacity of the sector

NCOSS works to support and strengthen the skills of the NSW community sector in the face of significant external events, ongoing reforms and an ever-changing operating environment. For 2019-20 our capacity building program covered the following topics:

- Digital Marketing Strategies for Non-Profits.
- Leadership Development: Better Leaders Ask Better Questions.
- Working With Other Organisations: MOU to Merger.
- Leading in Crisis Recovery - adopting good practice for a changed environment, managing remote teams, rebuilding workplace morale, creating clarity and focus in leadership.
- Parliamentary Inquiries: How to have your say and maximise your influence.

Training Impact

NCOSS training sessions aim to strengthen community sector leadership and capability through increasing knowledge, confidence and skills in relevant areas. Of the 96 (out of 155) participants who gave post-session feedback, 97% stated that their professional needs were met.

- 90% of attendees stated that their **knowledge** increased as a result of attending the NCOSS training.
- 87% of attendees stated that their **confidence** increased as a result of attending the NCOSS training.
- 96% of attendees stated that they intended to apply **new practice** to their work as a result of the NCOSS training.

“I found the workshop so empowering. I wish I had attended one of these much earlier! I can use these skills for writing other documents!” Attendee, NFP

“Wonderful support for leaders, especially at challenging times like these. Thank you so much! Very much appreciated :)” Attendee, CEO NFP

GOAL 3

Forming Constructive Partnerships to Deliver Outcomes

As a small organisation, partnerships are essential to enhancing our expertise, expanding our reach and maximising our impact. During the year, we partnered with our fellow peak bodies, academic institutions, corporate entities and government to deliver in key areas. The inability to host events and forums in the usual way gave rise to new opportunities to collaborate, including:

- Partnering with other peaks and Sydney Policy Lab in the Reimagining Commissioning project to inform the sector's role and relationship to DCJ in the commissioning process.
- Continued participation and provision of expert advice on the NSW Social Impact Investment Expert Advisory Panel, Greater Sydney Commission Social Issues Advisory Group, Health NGO Advisory Group, NSW Mental Health Commission Sexual Assault Reference Group and DCJ's Commissioning Co-Governance and State Peaks Working Groups.
- Partnering with the National Reading Writing Hotline to research the impact of literacy challenges for disadvantaged members of the community and the role of local NGOs in providing practical assistance to overcome these barriers.
- Partnering with Pathways Australia to provide discounted training and development to NCOSS members - supporting the sector to upskill senior leaders, managers and staff.
- Participating in the Deloitte Foundation Impact Day: Skills Data Analytics and Research workshop.
- Collaborating with CBA Social Impact Sector Banking to enable NCOSS members to attend CommBank Design Jam workshop, and apply design thinking techniques to complex issues.
- Participating on UTS Centre for Carers research working group.
- Working with Aon Insurance, via NCOSS Community Cover, to provide the community sector with information to assist not-for-profits identify their insurance needs and keep up to date with new and relevant products.

In the news

During 2019/20 we continued to grow our profile and our reputation as an authoritative voice on poverty and disadvantage in NSW. Compared with the previous year, we more than doubled the number of times we were mentioned across print, radio, television and online media channels.

October was a particularly busy month. The launch of our Mapping Economic Disadvantage in NSW report and interactive maps received extensive coverage across metropolitan and regional NSW.

During the early months of the pandemic (March to May 2020) NCOSS was a regular media presence, discussing the impacts of the pandemic on already vulnerable groups and those facing disadvantage for the first time. Our social media presence also grew - with increases in followers on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, increases in subscribers to our fortnightly eNews, and growth in unique users accessing our website for information and resources.

Working with the COSS network to on measures protect the most vulnerable during COVID-19

As part of the COSS network, NCOSS advocated with ACOSS, state and territory COSSes and other national peak bodies on a range of measures to protect the most vulnerable including: addressing gaps in the social safety net for people not eligible for income support, such as asylum seekers; ensuring access to adequate technology and communications equipment for people on low incomes, people with disability and people in remote communities; working with Aboriginal Controlled Organisations (ACOs) to address the needs of vulnerable Aboriginal communities, and; raising the need to take action to mitigate the risks for those in prison.



GOAL 4

Building a Strong, Effective and Sustainable NCOSS

The first half of 2019-20 saw us develop our Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022 and work towards our goal of building a strong, effective and sustainable NCOSS.

The second half of 2019-20 took that goal and substantially raised the bar. From the ravages of the 'black summer' bush fires to a global pandemic upending the economy – and highlighting systemic fault lines in 'business as usual' – NCOSS, like the rest of sector, faced the kind of challenges we haven't seen since we were established during the Great Depression. Our resources were stretched to the limits.

We've responded by ramping up efforts to shore up our financial position, diversify revenue sources, improve efficiency and reduce costs. At the same time, we sought to engage with, support and actively represent our members, and the people they work for and with, as an independent, public voice.

Growing our Membership

Growing our membership remains an important goal for NCOSS, as we are stronger and more effective with a diverse and engaged member base. Membership fees are also an essential revenue stream and give us greater independence. However, in uncertain times and with financial pressures escalating, membership growth can be difficult to achieve.

Our members range from small frontline services operating in metropolitan, regional and rural parts of NSW, through to state-wide providers and other peak bodies, as well as and individuals. Government and private sector organisations can join as associate members or Friends of NCOSS.

During 2019-20 we focused on delivering tangible benefits to members, and demonstrating our impact and relevance by continuing to raise our profile and contribute to public debate. Following a decline of total new members in 2018-19, we began to see an upwards trend in 2019-20.

Diversifying our funding base

While a challenge even at the best of times, NCOSS has actively pursued grant opportunities in 2019-20 with some success. For example:

- We were a recipient of the Community Sector Banking 2019 Social Investment Grants Program and developed the NCOSS Customer Satisfaction Survey toolkit for NGOs to gauge customer satisfaction with their services and continuously improve.
- We obtained a grant from the NSW Government's Office of Responsible Gambling to look at the NCOSS role on Local Committees. Local Committees are part of the oversight arrangements under the Government's ClubGRANTS scheme.
- We ramped up promotion of our Jobs Board, which is a cost-effective way for our members and other organisations to advertise positions and recruit staff.
- We partnered with the National Reading Writing Hotline to research the impact of literacy challenges for disadvantaged members of the community and the role of local NGOs in providing practical assistance to overcome these barriers.

Ensuring a capable team supported by strong governance

At the 2019 AGM, we welcomed for new faces to our Board:

- Associate Professor Wendy Foote, from the University of Newcastle, who is an expert on the operations of the welfare system and the need for systemic change
- Katherine McKernan, CEO of Homelessness NSW
- John Robertson, now CEO of Foodbank NSW/ACT
- Brad Webb, now CEO of The Samaritans.

In 2019-20 we successfully negotiated a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA). This was a highly collaborative process, involving staff, the Australian Services Union and the NCOSS management. The EBA enshrines important principles including our commitment to a workplace free of all forms of discrimination, highly flexible working arrangements, protections for staff dealing with domestic violence (including paid leave) and, recognising long-standing pay equity issues in a sector which largely employs women, our commitment to paying at least 10% above the award. It reflects our ongoing desire to be an employer of choice.



Appendix A: Submissions to inquiries and reviews

During 2019-20 we provided input to a range of legislative processes, review and inquiries, to ensure that issues and impacts for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups were given due consideration. These included:

1. Gaming Machines Regulation 2019
2. Inquiry into the Reproductive Health Care Reform Bill 2019
3. Draft Health Care and Social Assistance Work Health and Safety Sector Plan to 2022
4. Fines Amendment Bill 2019
5. NSW Disability Advocacy Review
6. Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety
7. Inquiry into the sustainability of energy supply and resources in NSW
8. Submission to Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
9. Inquiry into Adequacy of Newstart and related payments and alternative mechanisms to determine the level of income support payments in Australia
10. Consultation on highly contentious bills
11. NSW Productivity Commission 'Kickstarting the NSW Economy' Discussion Paper
12. NSW Review of Federal Financial Relations
13. Greater Sydney Commission Discussion Paper on the Place-based Infrastructure Compact Pilot
14. Productivity Commission inquiry into Mental Health
15. IPART NSW Draft Report into Maximum Opal Fares 2020 – 2024
16. National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Small Amount Credit Contract and Consumer Lease Reforms) Bill 2019
17. Council of Attorneys-General Review on Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility
18. NSW Parliament inquiry into health impacts of exposure to poor levels of air quality due to bushfire and drought.

Statement of Comprehensive Income

COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE OF NEW SOUTH WALES			
ABN 85 001 797 137			
OPERATING AS NCOSS			
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020			
	Note	2020	2019
		\$	\$
Revenue	2(a)	2,404,746	2,687,898
Interest revenue calculated using the effective interest rate method		17,236	29,445
Net realised and unrealised losses on financial assets held at fair value through profit or loss		(15,790)	(11,529)
Expenses:			
Administration expenses		(106,391)	(120,476)
Brokerage and sponsorships expense		(104,812)	(36,518)
Conference expenses		(44,393)	(183,793)
Consultants expense		(79,991)	(252,151)
Depreciation and amortisation expense		(237,802)	(160,366)
Employee benefits expense		(1,360,194)	(1,492,564)
Finance costs		(19,634)	-
Insurance expense		(15,762)	(21,830)
Office overheads expense		(14,288)	(15,405)
Premises expenses		(60,121)	(65,810)
Rental expenses	3	-	(179,840)
Travel expenses		(26,191)	(47,705)
Other expenses		(160,983)	(124,694)
Surplus for the year		175,630	4,662
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		175,630	4,662

Statement of Financial Position

COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE OF NEW SOUTH WALES
ABN 85 001 797 137
OPERATING AS NCOSS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 30 JUNE 2020

	Note	2020 \$	2019 \$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	488,764	742,473
Trade and other receivables	5	261,383	95,349
Financial assets	7	1,940,823	1,538,316
Other current assets	6	14,816	50,640
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		<u>2,705,786</u>	<u>2,426,778</u>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Financial assets	7	20,000	20,000
Plant and equipment	8	4,350	67,193
Lease assets	9	317,227	-
Other assets	6	54,673	51,270
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		<u>396,250</u>	<u>138,463</u>
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>3,102,036</u>	<u>2,565,241</u>
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	9	172,299	-
Trade and other payables	10	656,764	622,769
Provisions	11	2,972	-
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>832,035</u>	<u>622,769</u>
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	9	148,622	-
Provisions	11	110,720	107,443
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>259,342</u>	<u>107,443</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES		<u>1,091,377</u>	<u>730,212</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>2,010,659</u>	<u>1,835,029</u>
EQUITY			
Accumulated surplus		2,010,659	1,835,029
TOTAL EQUITY		<u>2,010,659</u>	<u>1,835,029</u>



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