

## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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### PEAK ORGANISATIONS URGE NSW GOVERNMENT TO COMMIT TO ROLLING OUT UNSPENT SOCIAL SECTOR TRANSFORMATION FUNDING

Peak bodies in the health and social services NGO sector are urging the NSW Government to commit to rolling out around \$5 million in funding promised to frontline organisations in NSW.

The funding is part of the Social Sector Transformation Fund (SSTF), which was an initiative in the 2020/21 Budget, intended to support small to medium sized NGOs to modernise their operations and remain efficient, effective and viable.

Despite many worthwhile proposals being put forward, not all of the money in the program was allocated, and there are now concerns that it will be subsumed back into government coffers.

Peak NSW organisations are now calling on the NSW Government to honour its commitment and allocate the unspent funding as originally intended.

**NCOSS CEO, Joanna Quilty** said: “This funding was for organisations across NSW that support the most vulnerable in the community.

“We have seen throughout the pandemic how vital these services are, from supporting families who need food, shelter and clothes, to protecting those escaping violence, to keeping a safe eye on vulnerable children at risk of harm.

“We also know how overworked and under-resourced these organisations are, particularly as the safety nets of JobKeeper and the JobSeeker supplement are not in play this time around.”

**Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies CEO, Robert Stirling** said: “The increased community need that these organisations are dealing with is significant, and this additional funding could be a vital lifeline.

“At a time of skyrocketing demand, organisations also need to build capability to cope with changed work practices brought about by the pandemic. This was a rare commitment of new funds to the sector, which the government must honour.”

**Fams CEO, Julie Hourigan Ruse** said: “When the NSW Government made the Budget announcement in November 2020 frontline services were thrilled to finally get direct resources to meet critical business needs to improve outcomes for clients

“These organisations continue to face overwhelming demand in the ongoing pandemic crisis, and the Government is sitting on around \$5 million that was allocated to increasing sector capacity.”

**AbSec CEO, John Leha** said: “The NSW Government must follow through on their commitment to fund the under-resourced frontline organisations that have been providing much-needed services throughout the pandemic. These organisations are crucial to supporting Aboriginal families doing it tough, and now is not the time to leave them stranded.”

**Local Community Services Association Executive Officer, Can Yasmut** said: “Many small and medium sized organisations in areas of concern throughout Sydney have had to spend or even overspend their government funding to provide emergency relief services. This would be a worthwhile funding allocation of unspent SSTF funds.”

**Shelter NSW CEO, John Engeler** said: “The underspend on the SSTF reflects the opportunity for front-facing organisations to further transform and urgently meet the additional operating challenges of a COVID-changed world. The best time to act has already passed – this commitment will help us to catch up and to keep going.”

**Physical Disability Council of NSW CEO, Serena Ovens** said: “The ability to access the additional underspent funds to support far greater capacity in organisations such as ours to reach and assist people with disability, some of the most isolated and at-risk populations can’t be underestimated. It’s vital the SSTF funds remaining are used to achieve this.”

**Youth Action CEO, Kate Munro** said: “Over the past two years youth services in NSW have been battling increased demand due to both COVID and natural disasters. They have needed to adapt the way they work and have risen to that challenge with limited resources.

“The SSTF provided a unique opportunity for small to medium organisations to invest in crucial operational processes to achieve positive outcomes for young people in this changed service delivery environment. Young people have borne the brunt of the pandemic across all areas of their lives, the remaining funding needs to be allocated in the way it was intended, to ensure they continue to be supported by a strong, sustainable youth sector.”

The organisations stand ready to work with the NSW Government to ensure this funding is spent fairly and transparently, in the most effective and efficient way possible.

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**This call is supported by the following NSW peak organisations:**

