

## Bega By-election 2022: Issues for Communities

From responding to housing and homelessness to addressing family violence and inadequate social supports, NCOSS is highlighting the solutions needed to drive down poverty and disadvantage in Bega.

This fact sheet has been developed specifically for our members and other interested parties. It highlights ongoing and emerging issues for people experiencing poverty and disadvantage in the Bega electorate, as well as offering solutions for long term structural change.

### The need for solutions to tackle disadvantage in Bega

[NATSEM research](#) commissioned by NCOSS, shows that most Bega communities are struggling with high levels of economic disadvantage. In the Bega electorate the percentage of the population living in poverty varies from 21.4% in Eden to 13.7% in Merimbula. The only area experiencing less poverty than the state average of 13.3% is Broulee-Tomakin. The research estimates that there is a total of nearly 10,000 people living in poverty across the electorate<sup>i</sup>.

It is worth noting that these figures are based on data from the 2016 Census – now, with two years of a pandemic behind us we know that disadvantage and inequality have most likely grown, with impacts hitting some groups harder than others.

Key issues include:

- The poverty rates for children are even higher with *over a third* of children in Bateman's Bay and Eden estimated to be living in poverty.
- First Nations households experience poverty rates of between a third to a half of households for most areas across the electorate.
- House prices have risen significantly across the region, for example by 29% in Bega township over the last 12 months<sup>ii</sup>.
- Nearly 16% of households were in mortgage or rental stress prior to these increases<sup>iii</sup>.
- In addition, there is a severe and growing gap in social housing provision with an average wait time of 5 to 10 years for people to access subsidised housing. Families in some areas are experiencing wait times of over 10 years<sup>iv</sup>.
- Support for people experiencing disadvantage because of Covid has been impacted by the recent cuts to the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment<sup>v</sup>.
- There has been a 9.8% increase in reports of domestic violence over June 2019 to June 2021<sup>vi</sup>.
- There has been a consequent sharp rise in the number of people seeking specialist homelessness services due to domestic violence.
- 61% of job losses since May 2021 have been in female-dominated industries<sup>vii</sup>
- Suicide rates in Bega Valley are twice the NSW average and in Eurobodalla Shire 1.5 times<sup>viii</sup>.
- Communities are struggling with the impacts of recovery from multiple disasters: Black Summer bushfires, Covid-19 and floods - for many, funding and expertise has been withdrawn too soon.<sup>ix</sup>
- Many local organisations have also been impacted by not being able to run fundraising and other community connector-type events.<sup>x</sup>
- While the Bega electorate has one of the highest rates of volunteering in the state<sup>xi</sup> volunteers (and community leaders) are exhausted, dwindling due to Covid isolation, illness and other impacts.<sup>xii</sup>

## The solutions

Communities are working hard to address issues and concerns that affect them and implement positive ideas for change. It is imperative that they are able to access the support and services that they need. The evidence is clear that by adequately resourcing communities and addressing inequality, resilience, mental health and physical wellbeing improve, and economies and innovation thrive<sup>xiii</sup>.

In our recent Pre-Budget Submission NCOSS outlined recommendations for change, developed in response to engagement and consultation with the many NCOSS members, other frontline services and peak organisations who have supported communities through bushfires, drought, floods, multiple COVID-19 outbreaks and associated economic and social dislocation. See the full discussion [here](#).

As a first step, we need to:

- Ensure people have a safe, healthy, accessible and affordable place to call home
  - Build 5,000 additional units of social housing every year for the next 10 years
  - Upgrade inefficient fixtures (water, heating and cooling) and improve the thermal performance of existing social housing stock
  - Renew and expand the NSW Appliance Replacement Offer program to support lower-income households to replace inefficient appliances
  - Mandate minimum accessibility standards (Silver Level Livable Design) in NSW building regulation
- Invest in essential support, social cohesion and job security for women by boosting recurrent baseline funding for the social services sector by 20 per cent
- Embed place-based NGOs in emergency management systems to improve local emergency responses and recovery.<sup>xiv</sup>

## Other Resources

[Bega Electorate Overview](#)

[Disadvantage in the Bega Electorate](#)

[Mapping Disadvantage interactive map](#)

[NCOSS Advocacy Toolkit](#)

[Rebuilding Women's Economic Security](#)

[After the Pandemic: building a more resilient and inclusive NSW](#)

[Community Resilience Wellbeing and Recovery Project – Bega Valley Case Study](#)

## References

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- <sup>i</sup> NCOSS 2022 *Economic Disadvantage in Bega Electorate Among Different Groups* <https://www.ncoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/20220128-Bega-Mapping-Disadvantage-Statistics.pdf>
- <sup>ii</sup> CoreLogic 2022 *Property Prices In Bega* viewed 20 January 2022 <https://www.propertyvalue.com.au/suburb/bega-2550-nsw>
- <sup>iii</sup> These estimates are prior to the impacts of Covid being taken into account. Australian Bureau Statistics 2021 *2016 Census Quickstats Bega SED* viewed 20 January 2022 [https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SED10009](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SED10009).
- <sup>iv</sup> Figures for Bega and Batemans Bay at Department of Communities and Justice 2020 *Expected Wait Times* viewed 20 January 2022 <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/applying-assistance/expected-waiting-times>
- <sup>v</sup> ACOSS 2022 *Another Income Hit for Casual workers* Viewed 20 January 2022 [https://www.acoss.org.au/media-releases/?media\\_release=another-income-hit-for-casual-workers-massive-cut-to-pandemic-leave-disaster-payment](https://www.acoss.org.au/media-releases/?media_release=another-income-hit-for-casual-workers-massive-cut-to-pandemic-leave-disaster-payment)
- <sup>vi</sup> NCOSS 2021 *After the Pandemic: Building a more resilient and inclusive NSW Pre-Budget submission 2022-23* viewed 19 January 2022 at <https://www.ncoss.org.au/policy-advocacy/policy-research-publications/ncoss-pre-budget-submission-2022-23/>
- <sup>vii</sup> Ditto.
- <sup>viii</sup> Mental Health Commission of NSW 2022 *Community Case Studies – Bega* viewed 19 January 2022 <https://www.nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au/advocacy-work/community-resilience-wellbeing-and-recovery-project-resources>
- <sup>ix</sup> Ditto.
- <sup>x</sup> Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal *Heartbeat of Rural Australia Research Study November 2021* accessed 19 January 2022 at <https://frrr.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FRRR-Heartbeat-of-Rural-Australia-Study-2021-FINAL.pdf>
- <sup>xi</sup> NSW Parliamentary Research Service 2018 *NSW State Electoral Districts Ranked by 2016 Census Characteristics Background Paper No 03/2018* viewed 20 January 2022 <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/NSW%20SEdS%20Ranked%20by%202016%20Census%20Characteristics.pdf>
- <sup>xii</sup> Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal 2021 *Heartbeat of Rural Australia Research Study November 2021* viewed 19 January 2022 <https://frrr.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FRRR-Heartbeat-of-Rural-Australia-Study-2021-FINAL.pdf>
- <sup>xiii</sup> United Nations 2020 *Inequality – Bridging the Divide* viewed 28 January 2022 <https://www.un.org/en/un75/inequality-bridging-divide>
- <sup>xiv</sup> NCOSS *After the Pandemic: Building a more resilient and inclusive NSW Pre-Budget submission 2022-23* accessed 19 January 2022 at <https://www.ncoss.org.au/policy-advocacy/policy-research-publications/ncoss-pre-budget-submission-2022-23/>