

JOINT MEDIA ALERT

5 March 2023

PENRITH CANDIDATES TO ATTEND NSW ELECTION ROUNDTABLE

Event details:

- **Date:** Arrive at 9.50am for a 10am start, Monday 6 March
- **Location:** 3 Trent St South Penrith NSW 2750
- **Attendance:** Please confirm your attendance with our media contact Billy Briggs on bbriggs@apa.au or 0474 697 235

Run sheet:

- Walk through of Nepean Community & Neighbourhood Services (NCNS) with candidates (images only, no interviews) – 20 mins
- Roundtable where candidates, NCOSS, LCSA and NCNS discuss key issues – 20 mins
- Media Q&A where journalists can ask questions of candidates, NCOSS, LCSA and NCNS – 10 mins
- Formalities conclude and media depart

Local candidates vying for the seat of Penrith will attend a roundtable event on Monday 6 March to hear from peak social services organisations about the need for core funding for Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs).

Karen McKeown (LAB), Vanessa Blazi (AJP) and Cate Faehrmann MP (GRNS MLC) will attend the event to hear from Local Community Services Association (LCSA), the NSW Council for Social Service (NCOSS) and Nepean Community & Neighbourhood Services (NCNS).

The key issue to be discussed is that NCCs in NSW must receive core funding from the NSW Government to be recognised for the essential, local support they provide through programs and services, particularly in times of crisis and for those doing it toughest.

Despite the critically important role NCCs play in supporting local communities, there is no dedicated funding from the Government to keep the doors open.

Instead, these centres must rely on program-based funding, one-off grants, fundraising and donations to cobble together sufficient funds to cover the cost of a coordinator and administrative support. NCCs are often not able to run community development programs at the scale required to the needs and aspirations of their communities.

NCOSS CEO Joanna Quilty said: “Neighbourhood centres are well placed to provide a raft of services in response to local community need – be it food relief, disability support, social connection, immediate assistance for those experiencing homelessness or domestic violence, or referral to specialist services.

“But managing such a diversity of service offerings is complex and requires strong oversight and dedicated resources.

“During the floods, fires and pandemic, in many instances these centres were first on the ground and stepped in as a quasi-emergency response team – providing urgent help to those in need.

“These services are critical during hard times including local emergency events, yet they don’t have any guaranteed core funding from the NSW Government that recognises this essential role and enables ongoing, sound management. This is completely unacceptable.

“That’s why we are calling on the candidates in Ballina to commit to providing core funding for NCCs in the lead-up to the NSW election.”

LCSA Acting Executive Officer Anthony Brown said: “When faced with life’s challenges people turn to those they know and trust in their local community for support.

“NCNS provides an accessible, inclusive and non-judgmental space for people to achieve positive outcomes for their lives, thanks to the dedicated staff and volunteers who continue to go above and beyond each day to assist all those who walk through their door.

“Yet despite these efforts – our centres are still left without proper resourcing or funding.

“We have joined forces with NCOSS and NCNS to raise this issue with local candidates and advocate for change before the State election.

“It’s now time for the local candidates to tell us whether they support our call or not.”

NCNS CEO Joy Impiombato said: “The last few years of incredibly challenging events has seen local neighbourhood and community centres step into the void.

“When emergency services didn’t turn up, we were there.

“When people needed food, water and shelter, we were there. During the pandemic, we were one of the few services providing basic food and medicine to people quarantining at home.

We continue to support the community through the ongoing cost-of-living crisis that impacts the most vulnerable. Many families report that without our service, they would not be able to meet the basic needs of providing food and shelter for their kids.

“We shouldn’t have to beg for basic funding, but we are. Neighbourhood Centres are first service that agencies and communities turn to in difficult times, that should translate to the provision of the basic core funding that we need to keep the centre open.

“It’s time the NSW Government took our work seriously and provided core funding for our important services.”

**Media contacts:
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