

Media Release

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\$3 BILLION FUNDING GAP WILL ENTRENCH POVERTY IN SOUTH WEST SYDNEY

Some \$3 billion in additional funding is needed every year for essential social services in South West Sydney, as a new report reveals the region is at risk of significantly increased poverty.

The *Beyond roads and bridges: Critical social infrastructure for South West Sydney* report, released by NCOSS today, reveals substantial investment is required by 2041, with South Western Sydney's population expected to boom by 30 per cent.

"A healthy and prosperous community needs more than roads and bridges – the Government needs to ensure there is also adequate investment in social infrastructure and services," Acting NCOSS CEO Ben McAlpine said.

"We hear government talk repeatedly about major infrastructure projects, such as a new Metro or new motorways, but we desperately need the social infrastructure to support these investments and the people who will use them.

"What's the point of a new multi-billion-dollar train line, if the people living next to it can't afford their rent or access critical community services?"

The study, conducted by Impact Economics and Policy, found residents in South West Sydney already face some of the highest levels of financial and social hardship in the state.

Fairfield is considered the most disadvantaged local government area in New South Wales with 23 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. Without urgent action, these issues will only get worse.

"We know 19 per cent of households in the area are already receiving rental support and by 2041, 17,000 additional families are going to need housing assistance. Almost eight per cent of the population in South West Sydney is living in social housing with 10,000 families on the waitlist," Mr McAlpine said.

"We desperately need Government to, at a minimum, meet the increase in population growth. Otherwise, these communities will fall further and further behind, to the point of no return.

"Simply to keep up with population growth, South West Sydney requires almost 11,000 additional social housing units by 2041. That's triple what will be built based on the current trajectory of funding."

South West Sydney is also projected to be one of the fastest growing regions in NSW, with the population reaching 1.24 million people in the next eight years.

"By 2041, South West Sydney is going to have a population comparable to what Adelaide has today. We've seen the NSW Budget dedicate billions of dollars to the physical infrastructure for the region, but it was largely silent on the growing social infrastructure needs," Mr McAlpine said.

"Our current trajectory risks entrenching poverty and failing to support the most disadvantaged communities in New South Wales."

Modelling shows by 2041 in South West Sydney there will be:

- 13,768 additional households facing severe rental stress
- 5,620 more women experiencing physical or sexual violence each year
- 1,728 children at risk of significant harm each year

"We need the government to urgently commit to increased funding and to put these dollar figures where they matter – in the Budget papers," Mr McAlpine said.

"Perhaps what is most frightening is this research has taken a conservative approach and doesn't cover all areas of social investment. In reality the funding gap is far, far worse than these figures show.

"The community and our sector has the expertise – we ask the government to partner with us to ensure that we take advantage of the benefits that this population growth has to offer."

NCOSS is the peak body for the social services sector in NSW, working closely with members and a wider network of organisations to advocate to alleviate poverty and disadvantage in NSW.

The *Beyond roads and bridges: Critical social infrastructure for South West Sydney* report can be found at ncoss.org.au

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BEYOND ROADS AND BRIDGES REPORT FACT SHEET

To address unmet need and population growth in South West Sydney by 2041 governments will need to invest up to an additional \$3.0 billion in current dollars, including:

- \$1.9 billion in social housing and housing assistance
- \$426 million in community mental health services
- \$422 million in child protection services
- \$109 million in domestic and family violence services
- \$51 million in migrant and refugee services.

South West Sydney statistics:

- **1.7 per cent** of people are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, compared to 3.4 per cent for NSW.
- **43 per cent** of people were born outside Australia, compared to 29 per cent for NSW.
- **56 per cent** of people speak a language other than English at home, compared to 28 per cent for NSW. The most commonly spoken languages in South West Sydney are Arabic, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese and Greek.
- **4.7 per cent** unemployment rate in June 2023, compared to 3.3 per cent for NSW and 3.6 per cent for Australia.
- **931** average score on the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage, below the NSW average of 984 (meaning more disadvantage). Fairfield is the most disadvantaged LGA in NSW.
- **23 per cent** of people in Fairfield lived below the poverty line in 2021. This is the highest of all LGAs in Greater Sydney. Canterbury-Bankstown was the second highest (21 per cent), Liverpool the fourth highest (19 per cent), and Campbelltown the fifth highest (18 per cent).
- **16 per cent** of people have a university degree, compared to 23 per cent in NSW.
- **42 per cent** of people had individual income less than \$800 a week in 2021, compared to 38 per cent for NSW.
- **63,000 people** in South West Sydney have a long-term mental health condition, this represents almost 1 in 17 people.
- **Almost 5,000 domestic violence-related assault** reports reported to police in 2022-23.
- **20,000 women experience physical or sexual violence** in South West Sydney each year, estimated to increase to over 25,400 by 2041.
- **13,000 children reported to child protection** services in 2022-23 as being at risk of significant harm.
- **31,000 humanitarian migrants** settled in South West Sydney in the 10 years to 2022-23 – that's 60 per cent of the NSW total.
- **36,000 people** under the age of 65 in South West Sydney **reported having a disability**, higher than the state average.
- By 2032 South West Sydney will see **an increase of 117 per cent in NDIS participants**, compared to 67 per cent growth got the NDIS overall.