

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW Budget – Searching for the ray of light

This year's NSW budget digs deep to deliver on infrastructure, but fails to address the region's and the state's biggest infrastructure need – Social Housing. In fact, while there are a few rays of light for the social and community services sector, they are narrow in the extreme.

“The lack of investment in social and affordable housing is the greatest missed opportunity of the 2020-21 Budget,” CEO of Community Industry Group, Nicky Sloan said “With over 50,000 applicants on the NSW social housing waiting list, the 780 new housing properties which have been announced over the next four years will do nothing to address the current housing crisis.”

“While the budget does promise some Aboriginal housing in Bomaderry, there is really nothing that will address the ten year waiting list for social housing in the region. When you compare this to the \$5.3bn for social housing which was recently committed to in the Victorian budget, it is a disappointment to say the least.”

One of the few rays of light is that the NSW Budget has delivered some security for the Homelessness Services sector, in particular some of the specialist homelessness services which were under threat due to funding uncertainty. However, funding for these vital services has only been secured for the next three years. There is an urgent need to secure adequate and long term funding so that these service providers can plan and invest for the future.

“The budget does contain \$50m for a Social Sector Transformation Fund,” Ms Sloan said. “This is a welcome recognition of the importance of small to medium not for profit organisations. While there are no details about the Fund at present, it is intended to help build capacity in these vital community assets, and help them leverage their learnings through the drought, fires and COVID-19 pandemic, and we look forward to seeing these funds injected into the sector across a region which has been so severely impacted by these crises.”

“In a region which has worked collaboratively for many years to attract new workers into the sector, we will also be eagerly awaiting details of the \$17m which has been announced to boost jobs in the disability support sector. We are strongly hopeful this will ensure a pipeline of support workers and enable disability service providers to invest in the upskilling of their staff.”

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About the Community Industry Group

Community Industry (formerly known as Illawarra Forum) is the peak body working for community services and organisations in the South East of NSW. It supports community organisations, promotes expertise and innovation in community development, fosters industry development and provides advocacy for social justice.

Community Industry Group represents the non-government community services industry in the South East of NSW and works closely with numerous organisations which provide support to vulnerable people across the region.