

MEDIA RELEASE

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Affordable Housing missing in the 'cost of living budget' - NSW Budget 2017/18

Community Industry Group calls tackling rental affordability the gaping hole in the NSW Government's so called 'cost of living' budget.

"Access to safe, accessible and affordable housing is the number one issue affecting families on low incomes and vulnerable people in NSW" said Nicky Sloan, CEO of Community Industry Group "While we once again welcome the extension of the Social and Affordable Housing Fund in the 2018/19 budget, the reality is that many people on welfare or on minimum wage are trying to navigate the private rental market. We need incentives to encourage more affordable private rental properties as well as an urgent investment in social housing."

"The 2018/19 budget holds a further \$61.3 million for the much-needed whole of government homelessness strategy." Said Ms Sloan "But let's be clear, it is much better to implement measures to stop people becoming homeless in the first place. The trauma and stress associated with becoming homeless can have devastating impacts on individuals and families. We need safe, secure, long-term housing solutions with adequate support services to keep people from falling into homelessness."

There are some shining stars in the budget, however, and Community Industry Group are pleased to see the investment in early childhood education, and the commitment to pre-school opportunities for children as young as three.

"There is much evidence to suggest that good quality early childhood education can have significant impacts in improving the prospects of disadvantaged children. This extends beyond the educational advantages, because attending pre-school can also improve connectivity to other services and to community" said Ms Sloan "and this could have major outcomes for areas like the Shoalhaven, where almost 1 in 5 children live below the poverty line."

However, education is not the only driver of positive change. Community Industry Group continues to call for more investment in early intervention programs to support families and communities.

"Investing in early intervention programs including capacity building and community development programs could prevent families slipping into crisis and reduce disadvantage, as well as reducing the number of children and young people in the child protection and Out of Home Care system." said Ms Sloan.

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Finally, while Community Industry Group once again welcomes the commitment to road infrastructure in the region, we once again highlight the need for greater investment in an effective and efficient public transport system for the Illawarra and Shoalhaven. Affordable and accessible transport is, without doubt, one of the main barriers to employment and training in the region.

“The investment in TAFE NSW, and in promoting apprenticeships by waiving fees, could offer major opportunities for our many unemployed young people” said Ms Sloan “but we need public transport to enable them to take advantage of these opportunities.”

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About the Community Industry Group

The Community Industry Group is the peak body working for community services and organisations in South East NSW. It supports community organisations, promotes expertise and innovation in community development, fosters industry development and provides advocacy for social justice.

The CI Group represents the non-government community services industry and works closely with numerous organisations which provide support to vulnerable people across the region including:

- Social housing providers;
- Homelessness services;
- Home and community care services;
- People with disability;
- Individuals and families with multiple layers of social and financial disadvantage;
- Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault ;
- Youth work programs;
- Community health services, including mental health and drug/alcohol services;
- Community legal centre services; and
- Community development and community capacity building.