

# MEDIA RELEASE

20 June 2019

## **NSW Budget – The Devil in the Details:**

### **Doorstop opportunity - Community Sector unites to call for change**

This year's NSW budget is a stark contrast to the Premier's post-election announcement that government would "put people at the heart of everything it does" and focus on reducing the cycle of disadvantage by "fixing problems that have been in the too-hard basket for too long". Drilling into the budget, rather, reveals an overall lack of investment in vital services for disadvantaged individuals and communities.

"The lack of investment in social and affordable housing is only the tip of this very big and very dangerous iceberg," CEO of Community Industry Group, Nicky Sloan said "While the budget contains nothing that will address the ten year waiting list for social housing in the region, there is more bad news for domestic and family violence, for out of home care, and for the very survival of grass roots community services."

"It is inconceivable that, at a time when domestic-violence related murder rates have doubled in NSW, there is no new funding for domestic violence services," said Sally Stevenson, General Manager of the Illawarra Women's Health Centre. "In fact, some essential domestic and family violence programs had not been re-funded in three women's health services. Thank goodness that has now been overturned."

The overturning of these budgetary measures only goes to show that this year's budget is ill-conceived and poorly focused.

"A women is hospitalised in Australia every two hours from DFV. One in four has been emotionally or mentally abused. How many more women have to suffer? How many more children need to die? Ms Stevenson added. "We urgently need more services, at all stages, to address this public health crisis. We need early intervention programs, crisis services, accommodation services, and long term trauma recovery services. We need them now. We need resources, not rhetoric."

Worryingly, the budget also contains elements which threaten the service delivery and indeed the very future of some community organisations. Scrutiny of the budget reveals that indexation for funded services is set at just 1.75% for the coming year.

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“A 1.75% indexation rate is an insult,” said CEO of Southern Youth and Family Services, Narelle Clay “When the National Wage Case means a 3% increase for all of our workers employed under the Modern Award, this leaves community organisations with no choice but to cut staff hours. Not only is that something that we, as employers, baulk at; but it means reduced services for vulnerable people.”

“This comes after many years of low indexation and increasing costs” Ms Clay added “So not only are we struggling to pay staff, but our funding is not even keeping up with the increasing costs of overheads. The pressure on not for profit providers is extreme. We risk losing great people and, potentially, great organisations from the sector if the NSW government doesn’t address this now.”

“Once again, the government has put profit before people,” Ms Sloan concluded. “We cannot accept that there is no more money for community services when government is delivering budgetary surpluses. Make no mistake, these surpluses come at a dreadful cost. They come at the cost of families who can’t feed their children, of older people getting hypothermia because they can’t heat their homes, and by women living in cars with their children because home is not safe and crisis refuges are at capacity.”

#### **Doorstop:**

**Nicky Sloan, Narelle Clay, and representatives of Community Services Organisations**

**10:30am Friday 21 June, 2019**

**Southern Youth and Family Services, 25 Lake Entrance Rd, Warilla**

#### **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 is an independent organisation governed by a committee of management elected annually by the membership.

Community Industry Group represents the non-government community services industry in the South East of NSW, which consists of approximately 300 organisations, and works closely with numerous organisations which provide support to vulnerable people across the region.

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