

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

FOR SMALL TO MEDIUM COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

Community Industry Group is concerned at the impact of changes to government policy which encourage competition and contestability among community services providers, and which effectively collapse small place-based funding contracts into large regional or state-based delivery models.

Small and medium place-based community organisations have often grown as a result of local community need. They are deeply embedded and enjoy relationships of trust with their communities, have a strong understanding of local needs and issues, and are able to vary their delivery to respond quickly to changing community needs. Current policy is putting their existence in jeopardy. Loss of funding contracts would herald the closure of many of these agencies, and the forfeiture of many decades of community engagement.

We urge candidates to declare their support for the ongoing funding of programs delivered by small, local, place based services, including community centres and neighbourhood centres, and recognise their valuable contribution to the development of engaged, supportive and connected communities.

In human and community services, competition:

- Erodes trust and collaboration amongst providers
- Discourages providers from sharing information
- Discourages coordinated advocacy to achieve positive change
- Diminishes the existing focus on early intervention and prevention

Small providers must not be squeezed out by a move to collapse contracts into larger programs. The business sector values small business for its role in employing locals, for knowing its community, and for offering niche services. We need to recognise the same value for our small community organisations. We need a rich and diverse community service sector which values large, medium and small providers – just like the business sector.

Our message to our candidates is:

- People have a right to high quality human services wherever they live and whatever their income.
- Competition cannot be assumed to improve the quality of service delivery or efficiency.
- Government has a responsibility to understand the services they fund, as well as their impact. They must value the strengths of community-based non-profit providers.
- Reforms should facilitate cooperation and responsiveness to users and communities.
- Services must be affordable to all who require them and free for those who cannot afford to pay.

While Community Services may not be the major contributor to gross regional product as a sector, we provide a high proportion of local jobs which generate local spending. More importantly we are vital to gross regional success, to gross regional achievement, and to gross regional happiness.