

# Media Release

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## **SOCIAL SERVICES PEAK: BIG SPENDING BUDGET FAILS THOSE MOST IN NEED**

The NSW Budget has failed those most in need, according to the state's peak social services body, the NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS).

NCOSS CEO Joanna Quilty said that the big spending budget includes some positive reform initiatives, but overall, the Budget fails those struggling the most and misses an opportunity to support the largely female social services sector.

"This Budget does little to support our most vulnerable communities, including people experiencing homelessness, those on the social housing waiting list and those who need a strong social service sector to lift them up," Ms Quilty said.

"It is frankly disgraceful that in NSW we have around 50,000 households on the social housing waiting list and waiting times of up to 10 years and this Budget doesn't make a dent in that – it simply fails to make any significant investment into new social and affordable housing.

"The increasingly tight rental market is putting further pressure on families with overcrowding, substandard living arrangements and homelessness on the rise.

"This Budget does nothing for those in the most precarious situations.

**"While \$37 million has been invested in providing 120 new social homes for rough sleepers, more than three times that amount has been handed out to professional NRL clubs – the priorities could not be more wrong."**

Ms Quilty said it was also concerning that there was a lack of certainty for frontline services about the rate of annual indexation to be passed on for the next financial year.

"Providing adequate indexation to frontline NGOs is vital to ensure they can meet rising costs including mandated minimum wage increases and continue to provide the required level of services to those most in need," she said.

"We are talking about domestic violence services, homeless shelters and community organisations providing legal advice, financial counselling, emergency relief and support for people with mental health challenges, and may not have enough funding to cover recent minimum wage rises.

"These organisations, many that haven't seen a real increase in funding since the 1990s, have gone above and beyond to support communities through COVID, natural disasters and now in the face of rising cost of living pressures.

"If they can't even rely on adequate indexation to meet the cost of mandated and much needed wage rises, it will be the female-dominated NGO workforce that will suffer through job losses and reduced hours.

"This also means those doing it the toughest will miss out on services and support."

Ms Quilty welcomed the Budget initiatives already announced to assist with some cost-of-living pressures and in reforming key areas.

These include increasing the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance program to address financial hardship and help cover the cost of energy bills; the investment into the ECEC sector, and increased funding for disaster management and recovery.

"These are much needed initiatives, but there is more to do – the social services sector is where people turn when they are in need, when they cannot afford the basic necessities."

"Without bolstered funding to the sector, including vital annual indexation that keeps pace with the recent Fair Work wage determination, we will struggle to maintain services and support people who are struggling to survive.

"Addressing these challenges is no small feat, but it will deliver economic and social dividends, driving job creation and boosting NSW's economic recovery."

For more information, visit [www.ncoss.org.au](http://www.ncoss.org.au)

**Media contact: Nick Trainor 0407 078 138**