

NSW Social Sector Transformation Fund (SSTF) Tranche 3
 NCOSS 'Vision, Voice, Value' Conference (17-18 October 2022)

FINAL REPORT

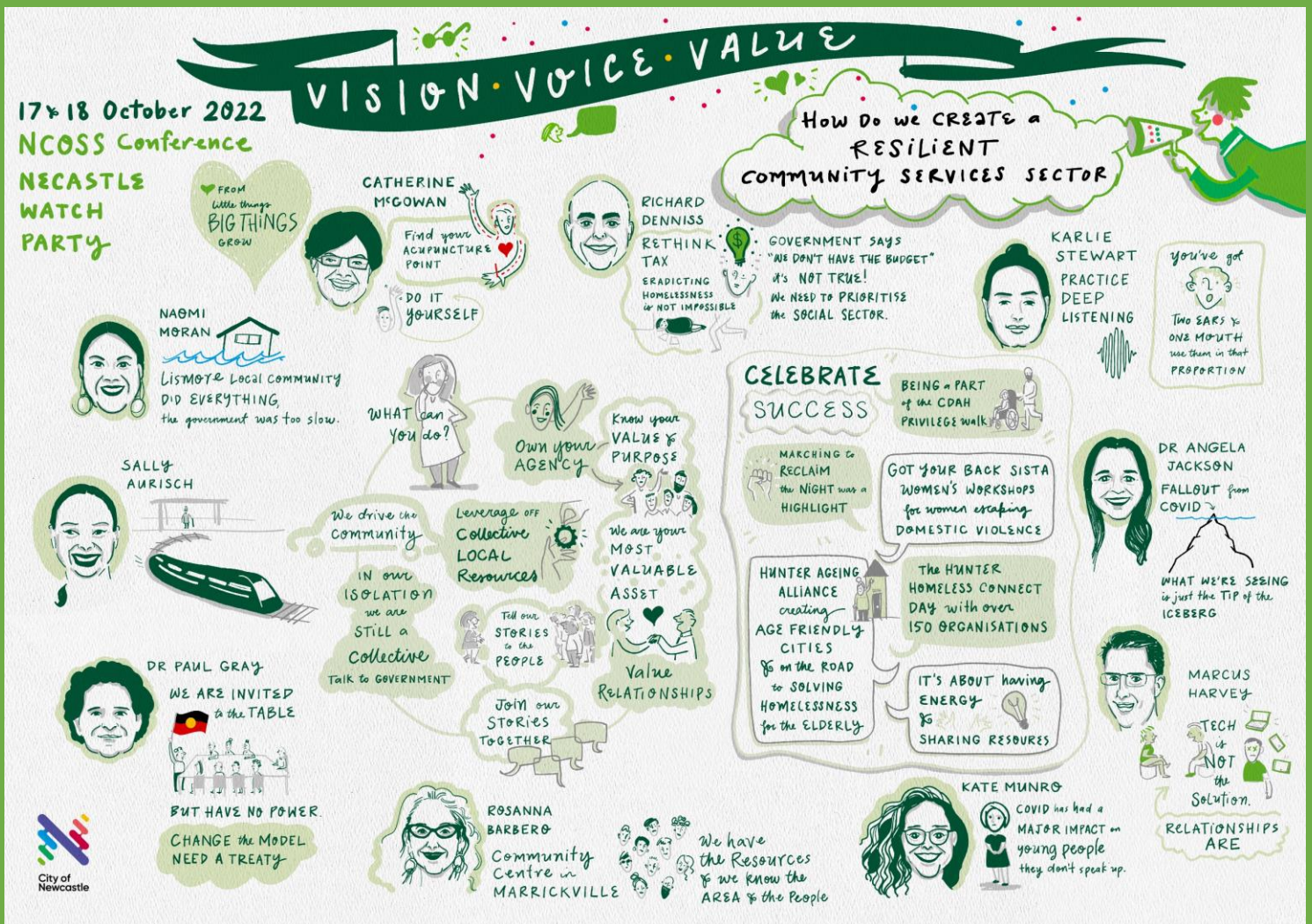


Image credit

NCOSS thanks the City of Newcastle for sharing this image. It is a visual representation of the thoughts and feedback of participants at the regional watch party collaboratively hosted by the City of Newcastle and Mosaic Multicultural Connections. Sketched live by Alex Wegner <http://sketchitlive.com.au/about/>.

About NCOSS

The NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) is the peak body for the social services sector in New South Wales. With over 400 members and a wider network of organisations and individuals who share our values, we advocate to alleviate poverty and disadvantage in NSW.

NCOSS was founded in 1934 during the Great Depression when unemployment rose to 28% and when extreme poverty was rampant. With few government programs available, assistance was provided through a limited number of overstretched religious charities. A small group was motivated to improve the lives of those suffering and so the NSW Council of Social Services was formed, to coordinate relief efforts and maximise benefit for those in need. Our core vision remains unchanged: a NSW free from poverty and disadvantage.

To achieve this vision, we work to:

- Amplify the experience of people affected by poverty or disadvantage to inform inclusive and equitable policy and decision making
- Identify and advocate for the foundations of a sustainable, connected, strong and diverse social service sector
- Focus NCOSS on core priorities for impact and sustainability

Over 880,000 people are living below the poverty line in NSW and this number is growing. As communities struggle to meet the cost of living, many people are being left behind. Natural disasters as well as the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated the already growing number of vulnerable communities.

As the peak body for the social services sector, NCOSS is uniquely placed to work together with our members, government, business and other stakeholders to strive for a more equitable and inclusive society. We provide a platform for sharing information and resources, developing agreed positions, progressing joint work and seeking greater transparency and delivery on commitments from government.

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1) Project objective

The main objective of the conference/symposium was to:

bring together small to medium-sized non-government organisations from the community services, health, and justice sectors to reflect on the achievements of the SSTF; showcase outcomes, new ways of delivering services and lessons learnt; and provide a forum for sharing knowledge, innovation and insights.

A secondary objective of the conference was to deliver a high-quality event that would be engaging, re-energising, and a way of recognising and 'giving back' to the sector after an extremely tough couple of years.

2) Project design

The conference was conceived and designed - guided by a steering committee comprising Tranche 3 SSTF providers and interested peak bodies - to align with the SSTF Theory of Change. Key themes explored in the conference program were selected because of this alignment, as well as their relevance to the current operating environment and topicality.

They included:

- ensuring diversity and inclusiveness of our key institutions;
- responding to the social and economic costs of the pandemic and natural disasters;
- supporting local voices and community-led responses to disasters;
- valuing the sector, changing the narrative and addressing workforce challenges;
- and leveraging the power of technology.

It was a free event which ran over two days (17 and 18 October 2022), with the program including:

- a mix of high-profile keynote addresses;
- panel discussions involving diverse sector and non-sector representatives;
- and interactive sessions to promote reflection, sharing of ideas and knowledge, and collaborative action for change.

A copy of the program is attached in the Appendix.

It was designed to be as accessible as possible with multiple ways through which organisations could participate. This enabled representatives from small to medium sized organisations from across NSW to come together either in-person at the main venue (the Australian Theatre for Young People's Rebel Wilson Theatre at Walsh Bay), or by joining online, or via watch parties held at five (5) locations:

- Walgett
- Newcastle
- Sydney
- Wagga Wagga (x 2)

SSTF funding meant that travel and accommodation costs were able to be provided for twenty (20) participants from rural and regional NSW; thus, ensuring that cost was not a prohibitive factor.

A conference dinner on the Monday night (17 October) provided further opportunity for participants to connect, share experiences, find common ground and celebrate their achievements of the past few years.

A survey monkey evaluation was completed at the end of the conference. While only 43 participants responded (due to many participants facing a long journey home), they provide an indicative sample of feedback on the conference.

3) Intended outcomes

The conference was intended to deliver:

- *Knowledge sharing and learning on innovations in service delivery;*
- *Insights on successes and opportunities for improvement;*
- *Interactive sessions to develop solutions for challenges facing the sector;*
- *Showcasing of innovations in Aboriginal and regional service provision; and*
- *New learnings and voices with unique perspectives*

4) Results

Registrations

- 283 registrants
 - 190 in-person (includes staff and speakers)
 - 93 online
 - 130 dinner registrants
 - Five (5) watch parties with approximately 50 in-and-out attendance over two days

First Nations participation

- One First Nations keynote speaker (Naomi Moran, First Nations Media Australia & Koori Mail)
- Six First Nations panellists (Manning Valley Indigenous Community Support Services, Ngunya Jarjum, Weave Youth & Community Services, Aboriginal Employment Strategy, AbSec, UTS Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education & Research)
- One (1) watch group (Dharriwaa Elders Group) in Walgett
- At least 11 participants (including three online) identified as First Nations participants or organisations. This is likely to be an under-representation as participants were not asked to identify their cultural background.

Regional participation

- Two keynote speakers were regionally based.
- Four panellists were regionally based.
- Approximately 76 participants attending in person, 21 participants on-line and 38 participants at watch parties were from rural and regional NSW.

Different voices and unique perspectives

The conference purposely drew in other perspectives and voices outside the social service sector to ensure a strategic perspective, broad exploration of relevant issues and cross-pollination of ideas.

In particular, the panel at the beginning of Day 1 encapsulated experts drawn from the media, academia, politics and other spheres. Other elements of the conference involved representatives from the corporate sector, economists, social enterprises and law.

As well, panellists from more 'niche' parts of the sector, or representing new endeavours, were included alongside more seasoned voices, to ensure a variety of perspectives.

The opportunity to bring health-funded and social service NGOs together was also unique as often, these parts of the broader sector see their issues as different and there are few opportunities to interact intensively.

Another key feature of the conference program was the priority focus on Aboriginal perspectives and culturally safe ways of working. The experience of rural and regional organisations was also given a strong platform. This was intentional to meet SSTF requirements and in recognition that these voices can often be 'drowned out' by the dominant players in the social service sector - non-Indigenous organisations and those based in metropolitan areas – but have much to offer when it comes to working innovatively and flexibly in complex environments and understanding diverse community needs.

Knowledge sharing and learnings on innovations in service delivery, successes and opportunities for improvement

This was a major theme running through the conference.

Day 1 incorporated a focus, through various panel discussions, on small to medium sized organisations from diverse locations and with diverse expertise sharing their experience to highlight: their approach to service delivery during natural disasters and the pandemic; what worked and what didn't; and how they responded with agility and flexibility to changing community demand in the face of uncertainty.

This was supplemented by keynote addresses from Cathy McGowan and Naomi Moran who both championed, from different perspectives and in different contexts, the power of community-driven responses in understanding and dealing with localised challenges, and the important role of community-based organisations in connecting to and harnessing community engagement to deliver in times of need.

Day 2 provided the opportunity to hear from a different set of voices - SSTF tranche 3 providers - on the innovations able to be explored and supported through the free advisory services; the challenges facing the sector; and opportunities for further innovation and improvement.

Given the strong focus of SSTF on technology, Day 2 also provided the opportunity to explore in greater depth the potential for technology to drive service enhancements and efficiencies, via a panel discussion with three different case studies presented.

This theme was also supported by the strong evidence provided by the two economist keynote speakers:

- Angela Jackson highlighted the social and economic costs for NSW from the last three years, the flow-on impacts of this for community organisations and the interventions that are required to ameliorate widening disadvantage.
- Richard Dennis presented evidence of the strategic importance of the social service sector, its contribution to a functioning society, and the need to more adequately recognise, value and remunerate the essential work of the sector

Interactive sessions to develop solutions for challenges facing the sector

The conference program design featured various opportunities for participants to interact and contribute their views and ideas for overcoming challenges.

These included:

- Thought provoking questions posed and data gathered through Mentimeter interactive technology
- Q&A sessions with keynote speakers and panellists
- A workshop session exploring bold actions required by organisations, the sector/peaks and government to respond to rising demand and economic challenges, and to build a fairer NSW supported by a strong social service sector
- A final session by Playback Theatre to draw out and feed back to participants their reflections and learnings from the conference.

Feedback from participants

Survey Monkey results (n=43)

- 98% strongly agreed or agreed that they learned something 'new and significant' as a result of attending.
- 88% strongly agreed or agreed that they 'want to take action on some of the issues raised at the conference'.
- 95% strongly agreed or agreed that the conference was relevant to them.

Sample quotes

- *The topics were certainly relevant and reflected the "lived experience" of the community sector throughout the last few years. Also, it was a wonderful use of the SSTF funding. It allowed regional organisations to attend a conference, that they do not always have the opportunity of doing so. (We) both had great and informative conversations with people representing many different service types, but most importantly, are wonderful advocates for the communities that they work with.*
- *We received affirmation I suppose that others are experiencing similar things, in same boat as us re providing the invisible infrastructure in place-based orgs*
- *Excellent and found it extremely valuable to connect with other services from across the state again in person*
- *Great to hear from others in the session. always a surprise what is happening in other areas when we are all doing our own local thing well*

- *This was such a deep uplifting experience*
- *Venue- spot on, dinner amazing. Smaller breaks worked well as did panel style discussions. Absolutely fantastic conference for reenergising the sector.*

Conference highlight reels

Please click on the links below to view video highlights.

- [NCOSS Vision, Voice, Value Conference Highlight reel 1](#)
- [NCOSS Vision, Voice, Value Conference Highlight reel 2](#)

5) Conclusion

The conference was a valuable and timely opportunity to bring together small to medium-sized NGOs from across NSW who have been the mainstay for communities over the last few years, but who are often overlooked when it comes to recognition and support. It enabled organisations to reflect on their experiences, be challenged by diverse perspectives, engage in peer support and learning, and to share important insights, including those in relation to the benefits of the SSTF. In so doing, the value derived from the totality of the SSTF has been further cemented, leveraged and shared across a wider audience.

As demonstrated above, the conference more than delivered on its objectives and intended outcomes. It will also result in the development of enduring resources in the form of videos of conference sessions to be placed on the NCOSS website, enabling the benefits to continue to be shared.

-see next page for Conference Program-

APPENDIX: CONFERENCE PROGRAM



CONFERENCE MC- Dee Madigan

Dee is an author and speaker as well as a panelist on ABC iview's Gruen. She also appears on ABC's The Drum, Channel 10's Studio10 and on Sky's The Contrarians and PM Live. Dee is a board member of Australians for Mental Health and Per Capita Australia.

Monday, 17 October 2022	
9:30	<p>Welcome to Country</p> <p>Uncle Allen Madden, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council</p>
9:40	<p>Conference Welcome</p> <p>OUR VOICE, OUR VISION, OUR VALUES: EVOLVING OUR SECTOR</p> <p>Joanna Quilty, NCOSS CEO</p>
9:45	<p>VISION: Keynote Address</p> <p>FROM LITTLE THINGS: THE POWER OF COMMUNITY IN TIMES LIKE THESE</p> <p>Catherine McGowan AO, Independent Member of the Australian House of Representatives- 2013 to 2019</p> <p><i>Meaningful change takes place at grassroots level. This was exemplified when the community of Indi, VIC mobilised a grassroots election campaign in 2013, and against all odds, claimed victory. 'The Indi Way' has since been at the heart of Cathy's work. In this session, Cathy offers practical examples of local communities working together to resolve issues, and to turn a collective vision into reality.</i></p>
10:10	<p>Questions for Cathy: Facilitated by MC Dee Madigan</p>
10:25	<p>VISION: Panel Discussion</p> <p>ADVANCING A FAIRER AUSTRALIA</p> <p>Dee Madigan, facilitator</p> <p><i>How do we increase diversity and representation in our institutions to create a fairer Australia? The panel will explore ways to create and advocate for greater diversity of representation in politics. How do we make this happen for our sector, as well as the institutions that influence people's lives?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cathy McGowan AO • Mariam Veiszadeh – CEO, Media Diversity Australia • Sally Aurisch – CEO, Blind Citizens Australia • Tu Le – Community Development Manager, Marrickville Legal Centre • Dr Paul Gray – Associate Professor, University of Technology Sydney Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education & Research • Karlie Stewart – Lecturer, School of Social Work, University of Wollongong/Program Manager, Weave Youth and Community Services

	Open forum – facilitated by Dee Madigan
11:20	Morning Tea
11:40	<p>ADDRESSING THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COSTS OF THE PANDEMIC AND NATURAL DISASTERS</p> <p>Dr Angela Jackson, Impact Economics and Policy-Lead Economist</p> <p><i>Based on the best available data, we know that that our communities will face new social and economic challenges because of the longer-term impact of the pandemic. Aftershock: Addressing the Economic and Social Costs of the Pandemic and Natural Disasters, is a recent report series prepared by Impact Economics and Policy for NCOSS and a coalition of peak bodies. It explores the impacts of the pandemic and natural disasters across several key domains of wellbeing: domestic violence, mental health, child welfare and development, and housing security.</i></p> <p>Panel discussion with peak bodies – Dr Angela Jackson, facilitator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michelle Rogers – Programs Manager, Ngunya Jarjum Aboriginal Child and Family Network • John Engeler – CEO, Shelter NSW • Kim Stace - Sector Engagement Manager, Fams • Kate Munro- CEO, Youth Action • Giancarlo de Vera (He/They) - Senior Manager of Policy, People with Disability Australia (PWD) • Can Yasmut – Executive Officer, Local Community Services Association (LCSA)
12.45	Lunch and networking
1.45	Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP) and NCOSS-ATYP Scholarship announcement
2.00	<p>VISION & VOICE</p> <p>LISTENING TO LOCAL VOICES & DOING WHAT IT TAKES TO SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITIES</p> <p>Naomi Moran, Chair of First Nations Media Australia (FNMA) & General Manager Koori Mail</p> <p><i>In the aftermath of the Lismore-Bundjalung Country flooding this year, the team at the Koori Mail stepped in to support the community when government agencies could not. Naomi says that “Indigenous people and communities have always been capable of self-determining what care for our people looks like during a crisis”. In this keynote address, Naomi will speak about listening to local voices and local knowledge, collaboration, resilience, and self-determination.</i></p> <p>Panel discussion - Dee Madigan, facilitator</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosanna Barbero - CEO, Addison Road Community Centre • Pauline Cook- CEO, Monaro Family Support Service • Liz Mackinlay- CEO, Australian Business Volunteers • Naomi Moran – Chair, First Nations Media Australia (FNMA) & General Manager, Koori Mail
3.00	Afternoon Tea
3.20	<p>VALUE</p> <p>Panel discussion – Karen Bevan, facilitator</p> <p><i>A core focus of the Social Sector Transformation Fund (SSTF), and the work that organisations have done in the last two years, has focussed on organisational sustainability.</i></p> <p><i>What do we know now about our sustainability? What do we need to do next, and how can we organise to embed sustainability throughout the sector, its funding, and the way we deliver services? This session will explore what sustainability looks like for the sector, what we’ve learned about sustainability through the</i></p>

	<p><i>SSTF and what needs to happen to support organisations and our sector to be stable, strong and thriving into the future.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloria Larman – CEO, Women’s Justice Network, CEO • Zac Carter – Executive Officer, Manning Valley Indigenous Community Support Service • Katrina Ironside – Executive Director, Community Legal Centres NSW • John Robertson – CEO, Foodbank NSW and Chair, NCOSS
3:50	<p>Audience Engagement Session</p> <p>INCREASED DEMAND AND RESPONDING TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACING OUR COMMUNITY</p> <p><i>What bold actions are needed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>From organisations</i> • <i>From the sector as a whole</i> • <i>From government</i> <p><i>to build a fairer, more inclusive NSW, and a sustainable, fit-for-purpose social services sector?</i></p>
4:30	<p>Closing remarks John Robertson, CEO Foodbank NSW and Chair, NCOSS</p>
5:00	<p>Close of Day 1</p>
<p>6:00-10:30 pm</p> <p>DRINKS & CONFERENCE DINNER</p> <p>The Theatre Bar at the End of the Wharf MC & Host: Writer and Comedian Jennifer Wong</p>	
<p>Tuesday, 18 October 2022</p>	
9:15	<p>VALUE: Keynote Address</p> <p>CHANGING THE NARRATIVE - THE SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR AND WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION</p> <p>Richard Denniss- Chief Economist and former Executive Director of The Australia Institute</p> <p><i>Richard Denniss is known for his ability to translate economic gobbledeygook into everyday language and has spoken with clarity about women’s economic security in the past. For this session, Richard crunches the numbers, and makes a candid case for changing the current economic narrative. Afterwards, Richard will be joined by a panel of sector representatives and experts, who will venture into the all-important question of- what society do we want to live in and how do pay for it?</i></p> <p>Panel Discussion</p> <p>ADDRESSING WORKFORCE CHALLENGES & POSITIONING OUR SECTOR FOR THE FUTURE</p> <p>Panellists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Esta Paschalidis-Chilas – CEO, Canterbury City Community Centre • Kristy Masella – Managing Director, Aboriginal Employment Strategy • Micaela Cronin – CEO, Workforce Innovation and Development Institute • Rob Stirling – CEO, Network on Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA) • Jenna Roberts – Head of Innovation, SANE Australia
10:30	<p>Morning Tea</p>

10:50	<p>Interactive Session – Mentimeter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the challenges and opportunities for our sector workforce? • What do we need to do to attract, retain, sustain and get the best out of our workforce? <p>Sector Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What can we as an organisation do?</i> • <i>What can the sector, including peaks, do?</i> • <i>What do we need from government?</i>
11:10	<p>VALUE</p> <p>COLLABORATION, SIMPLIFICATION, INTEGRATION: LEARNINGS FROM THE SOCIAL SECTOR TRANSFORMATION FUND (SSTF)</p> <p><i>In November 2020, the NSW Government rolled out the \$50 million Social Sector Transformation Fund (SSTF) program, primarily in response to COVID-19. It acknowledged that the sector was hit hard by the pandemic, with surges in demand and increased costs. The SSTF has provided a unique insight into our sector and how we are faring with a wide range of services and supports. In this session, a panel of SSTF support providers will share stories and case studies and some strategic lessons from their work with the sector.</i></p> <p>Panel discussion: Dee Madigan- facilitator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AbSec – John Byrne, Project Manager SSTF • Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies (ACWA)- Linda Watson, Director Learning & Development • Infoxchange - Marcus Harvey, Manager Digital Transformation Hub • Justice Connect – Geraldine Menere, Head of Not-for-Profit Law • NCOSS - Joanna Quilty, CEO • Sefa – Renee Martin, Head of Engagement • Social Impact Hub – Jessica Ngui, Acting Head of Advisory Services & Program Manager • NSW Communities and Justice - Stephen Chanphakeo, Director of Strategy, Policy and Commissioning
12:00 pm	<p>Lunch and networking</p>
12:50 pm	<p>TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION & SUSTAINABILITY</p> <p>Panel discussion on technology transformation- Dee Madigan, facilitator</p> <p><i>Technology has been a game changer for our sector during COVID-19, but still presents a challenge for organisations in terms of investment, development and sustainability. Meanwhile, the digital divide still means that when services go online, many vulnerable communities miss out. What have we learned from implementing the SSTF technology projects, and where can we go next? This panel will explore the possibilities for building on what we have learned through the SSTF investment and our experience during the pandemic.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • El Gibbs, award-winning writer and disability advocate • Matthew Keeley – Director, Youth Law Australia • Nadene Lee- CEO, Playgroup NSW • Marcus Harvey- Manager, Digital Transformation Hub Infoxchange
1:30	<p>REIMAGINING OUR SECTOR: DEVELOPING AN AGENDA FOR ACTION</p> <p><i>Dee Madigan and Joanna Quilty with audience participation</i></p> <p>What’s next for our sector?</p> <p>Together, we will design an action plan to build on the learning from the SSTF and our sector’s response to COVID, natural disaster, emergencies and the growing demand for our services.</p>

2:00	<p>Introducing Playback Theatre and the afternoon session</p> <p>Dee Madigan</p>
2:10	<p>In closing: PLAYING BACK OUR STORIES</p> <p>Playback Theatre Sydney</p> <p><i>Using the rich tradition of authentic storytelling and improvisational theatre, Playback Theatre Sydney will lead us into articulating some compelling thoughts or ideas that may have taken root in the past two days. By spontaneously (and sometimes hilariously) 'playing back' stories to each other, we delve into the art of candid communication and connect more genuinely with one another.</i></p>
3:30	<p>CLOSING REMARKS</p> <p>Joanna Quilty, NCOSS CEO</p>
4:00	<p>Close of conference</p>

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['Vision, Voice, Value' 2022 Conference](#)

Queries about this project to:

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