

Working Together for a Fairer Illawarra

The NCOSS policy platform sets out the opportunities to work together for a fairer Illawarra¹ and the investments that will deliver benefits for the future.

The next NSW Parliament can act decisively to provide immediate cost of living relief, build resilience for vulnerable population groups, and improve conditions and opportunities for the female dominated social service sector.

This fact sheet highlights the issues that need addressing, the costs involved in not addressing them, and provides links to the policy solutions that can drive the changes we need to see in our local communities.

We look forward to working with policymakers and elected officials to pursue opportunities which prioritise those most in need, deliver benefits for the future and set us on the path for a fairer Illawarra.

Quick Statistics for the Illawarra

- 3.9 % of the total NSW population or 313,482 people.
- 11,287 First Nations people.
- Slightly higher rates of one parent families – 16.8% of families compared with 15.8% in NSW.
- Lower median household incomes per week \$1,684 compared with \$1,829 for NSW.
- Slightly lower rates of renting, 29% of households, than for NSW at 32.6%.
- Lower numbers of households that speak a language other than English at home – 17% compared with 29.5% for NSW.²
- It contains a large part of the marginal electorate of Heathcote.

Key issues in the Illawarra

- 11% of low income respondents to the [NCOSS Cost of Living Survey](#) were aware of the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) scheme but only 1.7% had accessed it.³
- Across the state 21% of respondents were aware of the Low Income Household Rebate but only 4.7% had used it.
- 52% of respondents in Illawarra had trouble paying for at least one household expenditure item over the last 12 months, compared with the state average of 58%.⁴
- When short of money, one in three respondents in the Illawarra went without medication or healthcare (31%) and 24% went without a meal at least once in the last 12 months.
- Overall 1 in 5 people delayed going to the dentist because of cost concerns.
- Low income households in the Illawarra (38%) were the second most impacted by negative changes to their housing arrangement.⁵
- Overcrowding was reported by 17% of respondents in the Illawarra.

- 37.6% of households renting were in housing stress (35.5% in NSW).⁶
- The annual economic loss in the region due to flow-on impacts of housing stress on productivity and participation, is estimated at upwards of \$12.6m. ⁷
- Nearly \$1bn estimated costs in the region associated with increases in violence over the period 2020-25 - including direct health and productivity costs as well as indirect costs due to pain, suffering and premature mortality.
- The NSW Government per capita spending on Domestic and Family Violence is \$32.4 – one third of that spent by the Victorian government.
- Across NSW, 2,402 women return to live with a violent partner because of a lack of affordable housing, and a further 2,410 become homeless because they cannot find secure and permanent housing after leaving violence.⁸
- Homelessness overall, across NSW, has risen by 10% since the start of the pandemic.
- NSW has experienced a 13.4 per cent increase in the number of children from low socio-economic areas who are developmentally vulnerable at the start of school (over 2020 to 2021).
- Over 2 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children compared to 1 in 5 non-Indigenous children started their schooling journey developmentally vulnerable (2021).
- \$586m estimated lost lifetime earnings in the Illawarra region due to children missing face to face schooling over the pandemic.
- A slight decrease in the number of children at risk of significant harm in the Illawarra – Shoalhaven District compared to an increase statewide of 13.5%.⁹
- In the first half of 2022, NSW punters lost almost \$4bn playing the pokies.¹⁰
- An estimated \$280m will be lost in productivity over the period 2021-25 due to increases in poor mental health across the Illawarra, including anxiety and depression amongst the employed population.
- On average, NSW spends 33 per cent, or around \$53 less, on community mental health services per resident than other states and territories.

Our solutions

Our policy platform has been developed through close engagement with members and informed by a rigorous research agenda. For a summary of recommendations, click [here](#). To find a more detailed description of NCOSS's Policy Platform for a Fairer NSW click [here](#).

Contact Details

If you would like further information on the policy platform email advocacy@ncoss.org.au

¹ The Illawarra region is an ABS SA4 region incorporating the following LGA's: Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama. It also contains some unpopulated areas of the Wollondilly and Wingecaribee LGA's.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022 *Illawarra 2021 Census Quickstats* viewed 22 November 2022 <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/107>

³ Institute of Public Policy and Governance 2022 *Tough Times, Hard Choices Struggling households and the rising cost-of-living in NSW* Sydney. Following statistics come from this report apart from where indicated.

⁴ This included one or more of - going without prescribed medication/healthcare, meals, or essential hygiene items, being unable to afford mobile data or internet at home, to travel for essential reasons, minimum credit card payments, being unable

to pay their utility bills or rent/mortgage on time.

⁵ Negative changes to housing included a rent increase, moving in with family or friends due to cost, rent leave being terminated, moving house due to cost, damage to home due to a natural disaster and experiencing a period of homelessness.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022 *Illawarra 2021 Census Quickstats* viewed 22 November 2022

<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/107>

⁷Impact Economics and Policy 2022 *Aftershock: Addressing the Economic and Social Costs of the Pandemic and Natural Disasters Report Three – Housing Security* Sydney. Following statistics come from the [Aftershock Report series](#) apart from where indicated.

⁸ Equity Economics 2021, *Rebuilding Women's Economic Security – Investing in Social Housing in New South Wales, Sydney*

⁹ Department of Communities and Justice district.

¹⁰ Koziol, M (2022), *Average NSW pokes loss way above that of other states*. *Sydney Morning*

Herald. 5 September 2022 <https://www.smh.com.au/national/average-nsw-pokies-loss-way-above-that-of-other-states-20220901-p5benb.html>

