

## Working Together for a Fairer Western Sydney

The NCOSS policy platform sets out the opportunities to work together for a fairer Western Sydney<sup>1</sup> 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 economic impact of 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 Western Sydney.

### Quick Statistics – Western Sydney

- 32% of the total NSW population. Half of Greater Sydney population.
- 53,653 First Nations people – almost one fifth of the state’s First Nations population.
- \$1,713 (South West Sydney) to \$2,109 (Blacktown) median household income per week – compared with \$2,077 for Greater Sydney.
- 44.4% of households renting (Parramatta) to 28.3% (Outer South West) - compared with 35.9% for Greater Sydney.
- 68% of households speak a language other than English at home (South West Sydney) to 18.4% (Outer West- Blue Mountains) – 38.2% for Greater Sydney.<sup>2</sup>
- It contains the marginal electorates of East Hills, Holsworthy, Kogarah, Penrith and Wollondilly.

### Key Issues for Western Sydney

- 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.<sup>3</sup>
- Across the state 21% of respondents were aware of the Low Income Household Rebate but only 4.7% had used it.
- A higher proportion of respondents in Western Sydney, in some areas as high as 69%, had experienced difficulty paying for household expenditure items over the last 12 months, compared with the state average of 58%.<sup>4</sup>
- Overall 1 in 5 people delayed going to the dentist because of cost concerns.

- Respondents from Outer West - Blue Mountains reported the highest rate of overcrowding (30%).
- There was a high rate of housing stress across the region with the highest rate in South West Sydney - 43.7% of renters in housing stress in 2021.<sup>5</sup>
- The annual economic loss in Western Sydney - due to flow-on impacts of housing stress on productivity and participation - is estimated at over \$103m per annum.<sup>6</sup>
- The Blacktown, Parramatta, South West Sydney, and Inner South West regions experienced some of the highest increases in Domestic and Family Violence in the state over the course of the pandemic.<sup>7</sup>
- Across Western Sydney this represents over 19,200 women experiencing violence for the first time, and 14,720 experiencing an escalation in violence.<sup>8</sup>
- It is estimated that costs associated with this increase in violence in the region will total \$7.8 bn over the period 2020-25 - including direct health and productivity costs of \$1.05 bn, 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.<sup>9</sup>
- 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).
- 8 of the top 10 LGA's with the highest estimated lost lifetime earnings due to missing face to face schooling were in Western Sydney - with total lifetime losses across the region estimated at \$6.3bn.
- 26.7% increase in children at risk of significant harm in the South Western Sydney District, 15.7% in Nepean Blue Mountains District, and 8.3% in the Western Sydney District compared to the state average of 13.5%.<sup>10</sup>
- Total additional costs of this increase in cases of child abuse and neglect is estimated at over \$2.5bn for Western Sydney.
- In the first half of 2022, NSW punters lost almost \$4bn playing the pokies.<sup>11</sup>
- It is estimated that across Western Sydney \$2.36 bn could be lost in productivity over the period 2021-25 due to increases in poor mental health, including anxiety and depression, amongst the employed population.
- On average, NSW spends 33 per cent, or around \$53 less per resident, on community mental health services 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](mailto:advocacy@ncoss.org.au)

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this fact sheet we have included ABS SA4 regions as follows: Parramatta, Blacktown, Outer West - Blue Mountains, Sydney - South West, Inner South West, Outer South West, These areas are roughly aligned with the New South Wales Department of Planning's Metropolitan Strategy which includes 12 LGA's in Greater Western: City of Canterbury - Bankstown, City of Fairfield, Cumberland Council, City of Parramatta, City of Blacktown, Blue Mountains City Council, City of Hawkesbury, City of Penrith, Camden Council, City of Campbelltown, City of Liverpool and Wollondilly Shire - noting that the SA4 Region Inner South West additionally includes Bayside and Georges River LGA's.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics *Sydney South West 2021 Census Quickstats* viewed 17 November 2022

<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/127>

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Difficulty paying for household expenditure items was experienced by more survey respondents in the Inner South West 69%, South West Sydney 64%, Parramatta 60%, and Outer West- Blue Mountains 60%, compared to the state average of 58%. Household expenditure items include 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.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics *Sydney South West 2021 Census Quickstats* viewed 17 November 2022

<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/127>

<sup>6</sup> Impact 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.

<sup>7</sup> Based on AVO breaches from April 2020 to March 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Because these figures are based on the findings of a nationally representative study on the increased incidence of family and domestic violence across Australia in 2020, it is likely to underestimate the impact in Western Sydney which has experienced more stressors in terms of both natural disasters and COVID-19 restrictions than other parts of Australia (excluding Victoria).

<sup>9</sup> Equity Economics 2021, *Rebuilding Women's Economic Security – Investing in Social Housing in New South Wales, Sydney*

<sup>10</sup> Department of Communities and Justice districts.

<sup>11</sup> 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>