



JOINT MEDIA ALERT

24 February 2023

LISMORE CANDIDATES TO ATTEND NSW ELECTION ROUNDTABLE

Event details:

- **Date:** Arrive at 2.50pm for start at 3.00pm, Wednesday 1 March
- **Location:** Northern Rivers Gateway, 10 Centenary Dr, Goonellabah NSW 2480
- **Attendees:** Janelle Saffin MP (LAB), Alexander Rubin (NATS), Vanessa Rosayro and Alison Waters (AJP), and Kathryn Reid and Kashmir Miller (attending on behalf of Greens candidate Adam Guise)
- **RSVP:** Please confirm your attendance with our media contact Billy Briggs on bbriggs@apa.au or 0474 697 235

Run sheet:

- Walk through of Northern Rivers Gateway (NRG) with candidates (images only, no interviews) – 20 mins
- Roundtable where candidates, NCOSS, LCSA and NRG discuss key issues – 20 mins
- Media Q&A where journalists can ask questions of candidates, NCOSS, LCSA and NRG – 10 mins
- Formalities conclude and media depart.

Local candidates vying for the seat of Lismore will attend a roundtable event on Wednesday 1 March to hear from peak social services organisations about the need for core funding for Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs).

Janelle Saffin MP (LAB), Alexander Rubin (NATS), Vanessa Rosayro and Alison Waters (AJP), and Kathryn Reid and Kashmir Miller (attending on behalf of Greens candidate Adam Guise) will attend the event to hear from Local Community Services Association (LCSA), the NSW Council for Social Service (NCOSS) and Northern Rivers Gateway (NRG).

The key issue to be discussed is that NCCs in NSW must receive core funding from the NSW Government to be recognised for the essential, local support they provide through programs and services, particularly in times of crisis and for those doing it toughest.

Despite the critically important role NCCs play in supporting local communities, there is no dedicated funding from the Government to keep the doors open.

Instead, these centres must rely on program-based funding, one-off grants, fundraising and donations to cobble together sufficient funds to cover the cost of a coordinator and administrative support. NCCs are often not able to run community development programs at the scale required to the needs and aspirations of their communities.

NCOSS CEO Joanna Quilty said: “Neighbourhood centres are well placed to provide a raft of services in response to local community need – be it food relief, disability support, social connection, immediate assistance for those experiencing homelessness or domestic violence, or referral to specialist services.

“But managing such a diversity of service offerings is complex and requires strong oversight and dedicated resources.

“During the floods, fires and pandemic, in many instances these centres were first on the ground and stepped in as a quasi-emergency response team – providing urgent help to those in need.

“These services are critical during hard times including local emergency events, yet they don’t have any guaranteed core funding from the NSW Government that recognises this essential role and enables ongoing, sound management. This is completely unacceptable.

“That’s why we are calling on the candidates in Ballina to commit to providing core funding for NCCs in the lead-up to the NSW election.”

LCSA Acting Executive Officer Anthony Brown said: “When faced with life’s challenges people turn to those they know and trust in their local community for support.

“NRG provides an accessible, inclusive and non-judgmental space for people to achieve positive outcomes for their lives, thanks to the dedicated staff and volunteers who continue to go above and beyond each day to assist all those who walk through their door.

“Yet despite these efforts – our centres are still left without proper resourcing or funding.

“We have joined forces with NCOSS and NRG to raise this issue with local candidates and advocate for change before the State election.

“It’s now time for the local candidates to tell us whether they support our call or not.”

NRG Chief Executive Officer Jenni Beetson-Mortimer said: “Northern Rivers Community Gateway has been delivering financial and social supports to vulnerable communities for nearly 50 years through our community hub in Lismore.

“We ourselves have temporarily relocated due to floods, whilst increasing our service delivery by 300%. This is in response to growing needs from cost of living pressures and the impacts of floods.

“Our core funding levels for our neighbourhood centre and trauma counselling have remained the same since 1985. Like many other community centres, we need state government to adequately fund the ongoing work we do, to enable us to meet these growing needs.”

Media contacts:

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