

# Media Release

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## **NEW RESEARCH: ONE MILLION IN POVERTY, OLDER PEOPLE HIT HARDEST, INEQUALITY DEEPENS**

New research shows one million people in NSW are living in poverty. And, with Western Sydney going backwards while Eastern Sydney is improving, inequality across the city is deepening.

Commissioned by peak social services body NCOSS, the preliminary findings from the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) at the University of Canberra draw on 2021 census data to reveal the dire state of poverty across NSW.

NCOSS CEO Joanna Quilty said the initial findings provide another evidence point that your postcode can dictate the quality of your life in this city, and that something needs to be done.

“We have known for many years that people in Western Sydney are doing it tough, but this data shines a light on just how tough, and the fact it’s getting worse,” Ms Quilty said.

**“The so-called ‘latte line’ is becoming an impenetrable wall between those sitting pretty and those whose day-to-day lives are a constant struggle.**

“The data shows that poverty rates in suburbs like Woollahra, Bondi Beach and Clovelly have reduced. While in suburbs like Penrith, Ashcroft, and Smithfield it has gone the other way.

“It tells us that we have not shifted the dial on poverty rates over the past five years.

**“In fact, we’ve seen more than 100,000 additional people slip into poverty in NSW compared to 2016. As our population has grown, so too has the number of people living in poverty.**

“We also know increased cost of living pressures and relentless rate and rental hikes over the past 18 months have compounded these issues – so the reality is likely far worse today than the data shows.”

**Sadly, older people are the age group experiencing the biggest increase in poverty levels in NSW. Almost 50,000 more older people are living in poverty in NSW than in 2016, an increase of 43 per cent statewide. In Metro Sydney the increase is 50 per cent.**

This means that of the 100,000 additional people in poverty since 2016, older people make up half that number. In some areas, particularly in South-Western and Western Sydney, the rate of older people in poverty has more than doubled.

**The areas with the biggest growth in poverty for older people include Horsley Park (220 per cent increase), Lurnea-Cartwright (131 per cent increase), and Liverpool (106 per cent increase).**

“It is shocking to know that older people, some of whom are among our most vulnerable, are facing the biggest increases in poverty,” Ms Quilty said.

“The State and Federal Governments need to be looking after our older community members, not leaving them to languish below the poverty line.”

**The preliminary findings also reveal that children experience the highest rate of poverty of all age groups – 15 per cent.**

Some of the highest rates of children in poverty are in Western Sydney, with 41 per cent in South Granville and 38 per cent in Auburn.

**“It is incumbent on the newly elected NSW Premier Chris Minns and his Ministers to address these issues by building social housing, investing in essential social infrastructure, and prioritising policies that help those doing it tough.”**

Other key preliminary findings include:

- Being a single parent substantially increases the likelihood of living in poverty. 23 per cent of single parents live in poverty, compared to 11 per cent of couples with dependent children.

- Having a job does not inoculate you from poverty – particularly if it is a part-time job. 27 per cent of part time workers in Liverpool are living in poverty, up from 16 per cent. In Penrith it is 18 per cent, up from 7 per cent.
- Across NSW, there has been an increase in people renting and an increase in poverty amongst this group, driven by growing poverty rates for Sydney renters. More than 40 per cent of people living in poverty rent in the private rental market (412,800). Another 30 per cent own their own home with a mortgage (296,100).
- Parts of Regional NSW continue to do it particularly tough. The highest poverty rates are found along the Mid and Far North coasts, North West NSW and parts of New England and Central West. And we've seen poverty significantly deepen in the Riverina compared to 2016.
- Public housing is no longer the safety net it once was. Across all demographic groups, people living in public housing experienced the highest rates of poverty and the biggest increases since 2016.

Ms Quilty said NCOSS will closely examine the final report when it is completed, and then release a set of recommendations to the NSW Government to address these findings.

An interactive mapping tool will also be released with the final report, allowing policy makers, state and local government, and community organisations to better understand how poverty affects different locations and groups, and target their efforts accordingly.

“We thank NATSEM for its thorough work on this report, and we look forward to reviewing the final report and putting some clear and actionable solutions on the table.”

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