

Submission to NSW Government
'A New Direction for NSW: State Plan'



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ABOUT NCOSS

The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) is an independent non-government organisation and is the peak body for the non-government human services sector in NSW. NCOSS works with its members on behalf of disadvantaged people and communities towards achieving social justice in New South Wales.

It was established in 1935 and is part of a national network of Councils of Social Service, which operate in each State and Territory and at Commonwealth level.

NCOSS membership is composed of community organisations and interested individuals. Affiliate members include local government councils, business organisations and Government agencies. Through current membership forums, NCOSS represents more than 7,000 community organisations and over 100,000 consumers and individuals.

Member organisations are diverse; including unfunded self-help groups, children's services, youth services, emergency relief agencies, chronic illness and community care organisations, family support agencies, housing and homeless services, mental health, alcohol and other drug organisations, local indigenous community organisations, church groups, and a range of population-specific consumer advocacy agencies.

OVERVIEW OF THE STATE PLAN

NCOSS supports the development of a state plan

The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) supports the development of a comprehensive plan for the state's future, however we believe the NSW Government must take a rigorous approach to measuring its own performance against key social, economic and environmental measures if the plan is to deliver real results for the community.

The NSW State Plan ('the draft plan') follows successful initiatives in Victoria (*Growing Victoria Together*) and Tasmania (*Tasmania Together*) where clear targets, actions and results are now built into how government does it work. NCOSS has advocated for a similar approach here in NSW.

To that end NCOSS released a possible model for social performance reporting early in 2005. Published in the report *Measuring Up*, NCOSS proposed a set of social performance indicators that we believe should form the basis of the NSW State Plan. A copy of the Executive Summary of *Measuring Up* is included with this submission.

A clear statement of vision and values needs to be added to the plan

For the State Plan to achieve its goals it needs to articulate a medium to long term vision for the type of NSW society the government wishes to see realized over the next ten years.

At the moment this vision is implied as the draft plan moves directly to a specific set of themes to guide NSW Government actions, without providing a rationale as to why these themes are the most appropriate ones to choose. It also proposes priorities and success measures without contextualizing them within a broader long term vision.

We all want:

- To make NSW a better place to live;
- To reduce poverty and social exclusion, and encourage community participation and inclusion;
- To maintain high and stable levels of economic growth and employment;
- To ensure the state shares its prosperity to all its residents;
- To create higher standards of community well being through improved provision and access to education, health, housing, employment, justice and other community services;
- To enforce effective protection and sustainability of the environment; and
- To promote a just and equitable state that is enhanced by diversity and looks to the future.

The advantage of adding a statement of values to the plan is that important principles such as caring and compassion, human dignity and respect for the traditional owners of the land can be incorporated across the whole plan without having to be boxed into a particular theme.

More focus needs to be given to Aboriginal people and communities

The draft plan fails to acknowledge the unique status of Aboriginal peoples as the traditional owners of the land, and in particular their enduring cultural and spiritual relationship with country.

Nor does the plan place enough emphasis on the importance of turning around the appalling disadvantage that many Aboriginal people endure as a result of colonization. The draft Plan is severely lacking in specific goals and measures to improve the living standards of Aboriginal people and their communities across NSW.

Whilst the draft Plan talks about the importance of reinforcing the objectives of other existing strategies, including *Two Hands Together* it is important that the State Plan explicitly restate some of the key objectives of such existing strategies and refer to existing targets in the areas of Aboriginal health, education and community development.

The draft plan does not give enough emphasis to fighting poverty as a key goal of public policy.

NCOSS agrees that the plan be given appropriate status as the 'keytool of public policy'. However this requires a delicate balance being struck between flexibility and focus. It also requires that the right mix of priorities be included in the plan.

This is particularly the case since 'Government activities that do not contribute to these priorities will be carefully scrutinized to determine whether there are opportunities to re-allocate resources to the highest priorities.'

A significant omission from the challenges identified in the plan and the priorities that flow from these challenges is a clear statement about the need to adequately address social exclusion, poverty and disadvantage. There should be a baseline thematic of tackling disadvantage in the plan or there is a risk that anti-poverty strategies will not gain budgetary approval because they don't line up neatly under the plan.

Some people argue that poverty is about income support and so is a Commonwealth responsibility. This fails to recognize that poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion are complex phenomena that need the full efforts of all levels of government if people are to enjoy better wellbeing. Whilst NCOSS recognizes that the state government cannot be held responsible for inadequate levels of income support they are very clearly responsible for policy drivers that impact upon the lived experience of low income people including education, health, transport, housing, concessions etc. Even where human services are subject to Commonwealth/State agreements the state government can and should do a great deal to alleviate disadvantage in our state.

NCOSS considers that the Victorian approach focusing on quality, accessibility, equity, participation, diversity, reducing disadvantage and building a fairer society should be a stronger feature in the NSW state plan. This recognizes the role of the various levels of government and makes a clear statement that the wellbeing of all residents is the state government's priority.

Some people are invisible in the plan, for example people from gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender and inter-sex communities.

Just as bio diversity is central to environmental sustainability so is social diversity to community wellbeing. This includes access and equity for culturally and

linguistically diverse communities, refugees, people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and bi-sexual, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender and inter-sex communities.

Unfortunately the draft plan makes very little reference to diversity, access or equity. This is a missed opportunity, both in terms of identifying one of the greatest assets of our state but also in terms of future planning and economic sustainability. For example, the promotion of universal housing design to facilitate better outcomes for people with disability will, at the same time, produce stock that will be useable by our ageing population over time. Investing now will deliver long-term savings.

More emphasis needs to be given to facilitating the participation of key partners in the delivery of the plan including local government and the non government sector.

The role of local government and NGOs in shaping the wellbeing of people and local communities across NSW is poorly acknowledged in the draft State Plan. This limits the scope of the plan so that it becomes a guide for public sector agencies rather than framework for community building and improving wellbeing across the State.

Population groups are described as passive recipients or problems to be solved rather than active citizens.

For example, older people are only mentioned either as a population projection problem (ie ageing population, a care need (requiring increased aged care services) or workforce deficiency (need to retain older workers or need trained workforce for care and support). There is no mention of older people as a resource or positive influence. Some of this can be managed through changes in language, but the plan overall needs to a more strength based approach.

The performance measures in the plan are generic and require more detail. There should be clearly articulated indicators and pre-agreed measurement tools all spelt out in the final document

The draft plan contains some social performance measures, however, many of these are quite generic and do not specify targets around the particular needs of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, reflecting the absence of a clear anti poverty strategy within the plan. NCOSS notes that some of these measures already exist in other plans (for example in regards to Aboriginal education).

Some of the priorities are clear about measurement (eg. yr9 –12 retention) but others are vague about both what is to be measured and by what indicator (eg. access to health services). Also, some of the measures of success are outcomes while others are outputs or actions.

It is suggested that appropriate long term targets will be developed through the current consultation exercise. NCOSS welcomes this approach, recognizing that targets need to be aspirational but still achievable in the medium term (ten years).

When setting targets it will be important to ensure most can be captured through existing data sources. Most importantly targets and measurement must focus on real results.

A key question is how the state plan will align with other existing plans that already have some targets built in.

Some of the actions in the Plan have already been announced e.g. the *Stronger Together* disability plan, the Sydney Metro Strategy: *City of Cities* and *Re-shaping Public Housing*.

Where specific targets have been included in these previously announced initiatives these are not included in the State Plan.

It is important that a transparent process is put in place for aligning the targets and results of each of these various plans so that we avoid planning for planning's sake, and the public can easily track expenditure and results for the community against the plans.

It is good that the implementation of announced plans is to be explicitly incorporated into the State Plan. In the process of doing so, however, it is important we do not lose or weaken key benchmarks identified in these existing plans. For example, one of the fundamental aims of the Metropolitan Strategy is to increase the percentage of the population living within 30 minutes by public transport of a city or major centre. This should be inferred in the State Plan.

DETAILED COMMENTS ON DRAFT STATE PLAN

Plan ahead

The 'plan ahead' theme is not really a theme but explains the broad institutional arrangements for the plan.

NCOSS supports the inclusion of the 10 year focus across key areas of performance. This should contribute to planning and delivering over the long term, rather than political advantage.

NCOSS also welcomes the intention to measure performance on an annual basis. However we need to ensure that the measures are the right ones and are at a meaningful level of detail.

The draft plan does not currently propose that annual reports of all NSW Government agencies be refined so that each agency reports on its progress of achievements against the Plan's goals (where applicable). This is a missed opportunity to close the reporting loop. Better integration between the plan and reporting by the Auditor General should also be considered as part of the process of aligning measurement of public sector agencies performance within the existing accountability framework.

NCOSS supports the integration of the State Plan into the Cabinet and budget cycles, so long as the plan does not remove the flexibility needed to respond to emerging needs. NCOSS also supports the development of performance agreements between CEOs/Director Generals and the Premier. NCOSS particularly welcomes the intention to plan across government portfolios. A whole of government approach is preferable so long as the budget and performance measures remain transparent and are linked back to Ministerial accountability.

NCOSS seeks more detail on the statement that the plan will include 'further realignment of agency structures to deliver the plan's priorities in a more coherent way' (p13). The draft plan does not canvass concrete proposals to do so. The draft plan is particularly weak on developing effective whole of government responses to identified challenges.

NCOSS is pleased to see that the plan will be reviewed in 2009 however we hope that a more comprehensive process for community consultation will take place at that time compared to the five week consultation process for the draft plan.

More clarity is needed on how community feedback on performance might be included in the plan and the institutional arrangements for that. For example the Social Justice Reference Group could play an important role in monitoring the implementation of the Plan.

Respect and Responsibility

Keeping people safe

NCOSS recognizes that crime rates maybe falling however perceptions of crime may not follow this trend.

However we note that domestic violence, family violence and sexual assault continue to be a blight on communities. In 2004, NSW Police recorded 68,984 incidents of assault. Of these, 25,761 (37.3%) were domestic assaults. The actual number is likely to be much higher as researchers consistently find that only 20% of such incidents are reported to the police.

NCOSS supports the draft plan focus on reducing violent crime. The commitment to implement a range of programs to prevent and respond to domestic violence is welcome, however what is also needed is an integrated, statewide approach which includes significant resources for rural, regional and remote areas.

The clear message from Aboriginal women regarding preventing and reducing violence should be heard and acted upon. A consistent theme is the need to adequately invest in a cohesive and consistent response to domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse that is culturally sensitive, treats the trauma, does not re-victimise and listens to and respects the experiences of people surviving violence.

Addressing sexual assault and domestic violence, both in terms of prevention and redress, is a priority issue that requires adequate resourcing of police liaison officers, chamber registrars, refuges and legal services.

Tackling anti social behavior

Whilst NCOSS acknowledges that communities have a right to live safely, law and order populism tends to divide communities. It leads to higher levels of community conflict and criminalises marginalised communities. It can feed into racism and discrimination. It also diverts attention and resources away from sound, evidence based social policies that work. The state plan needs to show leadership in this regard and strike a fair balance in responding to both the causes and consequences of criminal behavior.

NCOSS is very concerned that the general tone of the *respect and responsibility* theme has such a strong focus on pathologising individuals. This is particularly the case in the *tackling anti-social behavior* section. There is no mention of poverty or locational disadvantage in this section – the ‘problem’ is individualized.

At best this disregards the complex range of factors that contributes to social disorder and at worst places unreasonable expectations on schools and families who are doing their best to cope in what might be very challenging circumstances.

The draft plan priorities focus heavily on existing services. There is no vision around expanding services for young people, just engagement in activities that are assumed to exist. Nor is there any significant focus on intergenerational contact and activities to build trust in communities. The rights of young people to enjoy public space and to participate in community life are not adequately recognized in the plan.

Communities need to feel that the police are responsive to their needs, and will respond proactively to their concerns about crime. The best organised

communities, with the thriving community networks, are often the most effective in preventing crime. But they need resources to deliver local solutions to their crime issues, for example, by organising activities for young people who complain of 'nothing to do and nowhere to go', or by providing more information and support on a range of issues from domestic violence and sexual abuse, to alcohol and drug treatment.

Harmonious communities

The events in Cronulla last year demonstrate that social harmony is fragile and that it needs to be nurtured. It requires leadership from government in denouncing racism and divisive politics.

NCOSS welcomes the recognition of the need for harmonious communities, but notes that this section does not contain any specific anti racism strategy beyond the individual complaint based *Race Discrimination Act*

In contrast the Victorian Justice Statement which sits underneath the GVT2 plan includes specific reference to tackling systemic discrimination. GVT2 also specifically refers to the provision of increased funding to multicultural community organisations, the implementation of racial and religious tolerance legislation, and legislative reforms to recognise the rights of same-sex couples.

Key strategies

The justice system is the cornerstone of a safe, cohesive and caring community. For the justice system to work it needs to make sure that disputes are settled fairly, that victims rights are observed and that offenders are dealt with in a way that will reduce re-offending. To do this a modern justice system must address the causes of the continuing over-representation of offenders from disadvantaged and marginalized backgrounds.

NCOSS welcomes the acknowledgement in the plan of the importance of tackling the causes of crime as well as the consequences. In particular NCOSS supports schemes such as youth diversion, the MERIT and drug courts, and the development of local crime prevention partnerships.

NCOSS supports the focus on reducing re-offending. However more emphasis needs to be given to reducing re-offending and recidivism through rehabilitation programs in prisons and through effectively resourced post release programs, including specialist support for women ex-prisoners, prisoner with a disability and young people leaving juvenile detention.

Whilst the police force needs to be properly supported, modern policing is equally reliant on positive community relations and proper observance of human rights. More emphasis on these principles needs to be included in the plan.

The plan focuses exclusively on criminal law. This ignores the fact that most peoples interaction with the law is on civil matters such as housing problems, debt, neighbour disputes, consumer problems etc. The plan makes no reference to access to justice. This is serious omission from the plan.

To ensure a safe society it is critical to adequately provide for information on legal rights and access to legal services; have a strong justice sector that provides actual rights to remedies and respect for the rule of law.

Improving services

NCOSS supports the theme of *'Improving Services'* but a more systemic approach to reducing disadvantage is needed. In particular services need to be accessible, affordable and appropriate.

Geographic equity and other equity issues are not fully explored under *Better Services*. No specific mention is made of remote communities and the particular challenges faced in ensuring a decent quality of life for people in those communities.

Many of the strategies described may not suit the particular needs of rural, regional and remote communities. Feedback from NCOSS members is that the plan is somewhat Sydney centric and does not grasp the significant gaps in human service delivery and infrastructure that currently exist beyond the major cities. The lack of public transport in rural NSW is not addressed in the plan even though this is one of the major drivers of rural poverty.

Rural and remote communities do not have a significant degree of choice and often are faced with over stretched and under resourced public services, distances to travel for services or a lack of either comprehensive quality public or private care (dental services are a good example of this).

Health care

NCOSS agrees with the imperative to close the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal people. With the life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 17 years lower than other members of the community turning the shameful disparity between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people around must be one of the most important priorities for our community.

With a heavy focus on behaviour change, the draft plan does not mention addressing the social determinants of health in key priorities, strategies or measuring success. This is a significant lost opportunity. The state plan is the ideal vehicle to take a whole of government approach to the issue and to set some realistic targets around reducing health inequity.

There is no mention of oral health care in the draft plan. This is a serious omission. Dental caries is the most prevalent health problem in Australia. Periodontal diseases are the fifth most prevalent health problem.

There is scant mention of older people under health care section. NCOSS supports the extensions of the ComPacks and SAFTE programs. We are concerned that these may be omitted from future state budgets if they do not fit neatly within one of the state plan priorities. A way to incorporate effective discharge planning would be to include a priority around effective transitioning from acute services across human services. This could potentially be included under the proposed theme of a 'fairer NSW'.

There is no mention of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (including refugees) in the health care section. NCOSS notes that the *Multicultural Health Strategic Plan* is yet to be endorsed. The last plan, *Health services for a CALD society-implementation plan* uses 1991 census data. *Strategic directions for Refugee Health* was last reviewed in 1999 and is also using old data.

NCOSS notes that the measuring success indicators for health in the draft plan focus predominately on acute services and treatment or risk behaviours and has an illness focus. For example, the focus for achieving the key national benchmarks in health services is on acute and treatment services rather than prevention and equity in health outcomes.

NCOSS supports the inclusion of performance measures regarding avoidable hospital admissions for older people and people with chronic illness if the focus is on providing early intervention and preventative services. Within this group are also some communities (rural) and population groups in most need e.g. Aboriginal communities who have the highest rate of chronic illness.

Education and training

The priorities for education in the draft plan are quite limited. There is no mention of universal access to preschool/early childhood education and care. There are no strategies around reducing truancy (via improved curriculum relevance) or suspensions. The transition to high school as a key time in a child's development and subsequent educational attainment is not mentioned.

NCOSS also notes that the discussion about education does not identify low socio economic status and educational need – with no recognition of need for differential resourcing. Nor is there recognition of increasing numbers of students with disabilities and need to plan and cater for these students.

NCOSS notes the discussion of the problems faced by students who do not complete year 12. Although increasing the retention rate is a reasonable performance measure, clear strategies for supporting students who do not complete high school need to also be put in place as part of a broader anti poverty strategy under the plan.

NCOSS notes that specific targets and performance indicators for improved education outcomes of Aboriginal students are included in the *Aboriginal Education Plan*. This is an example of how different plans will need to be effectively integrated to ensure the detailed measures are clearly transparent.

NCOSS notes the discussion of TAFE and reminds the state government that in the 2006.07 state budget TAFE funding was increased by only 4.8 per cent with enrolments predicted to remain static with a drop in staff of around 100. Aside from TAFE there is no mention of workforce training in this part of the draft plan.

Older people and people with disabilities should have access to TAFE and often complain of failing access due to non-vocational outcomes – despite trying to seek skills for employment and volunteering.

Transport

Throughout this section there is not enough focus upon connectivity and the role transport plays as an enabler of community participation by older people, as a means of breaking down social isolation, of linking people to services and to promoting well being through optimal homes/jobs/transport alignment.

The draft plan makes a welcome commitment to increase the capacity and reliability of public transport. However it needs to be acknowledged that affordability is also a significant barrier for some low income groups.

Some indicators in the draft plan could lead to policy distortion, for example focusing on public transport in peak periods could lead to realignment of public transport services at the expense of off-peak services.

The draft plan does not include any significant new strategies for tackling transport disadvantage caused by location, for example in outer Sydney or rural, regional and remote NSW.

Health related transport is not mentioned or prioritized, missing an important opportunity to take a whole of government approach to a significant social problem.

Similarly a focus on accessible transport is missing from the plan. Some targets for accessibility already exist. It would be useful to cross refer to these in the plan if possible.

The commitment to develop a community transport strategy to improve access to government services is welcomed but further details are required.

'Compassion and support for the most vulnerable'

Where human services are discussed in this part of the draft plan they are posited in terms of compassion for the most needy rather than social investment. This ignores systemic factors and misses the value of an effective human service system as an enabler of full participation in the community. The intent may be well meaning but the use of this language may also be patronizing as it implies that consumers of human services are passive recipients.

A more enabling approach would be to focus on full and effective participation of all people in the community under the broad theme of 'A fairer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity'.

This does not mean that the plan needs to lose the important value of care and compassion. Rather, this should be included as a value statement for the plan as it is more a statement of overarching principle than a strategy.

Disability services, children's services, mental health and social housing are all grouped under the heading. Despite this grouping, the obvious interconnections between these issues are not explored.

NCOSS supports the integration of the *Stronger Together* disability plan into the State Plan, noting our earlier comments on tracking results and spending. There remains however some significant identified gaps in provision to people with disabilities both under *Stronger Together* and beyond.

Stronger Together should be completed by strategies to meet the unmet needs of people living in Boarding Houses, increased resources for Aids for the Disabled Program (PADP) and improvements to Home and Community Care services, in particular to respond to ongoing, significant unmet need. Whilst these may be detailed in other plans, a cross reference in the state plan to progressively meeting unmet needs would be a welcome addition.

With regards to children, NCOSS welcomes the inclusion of a clear statement in the plan that achieving early developmental milestones is a major determinant of economic and social outcomes later in life (p 24). NCOSS agrees that investing in children and young people is one of the best social investments a community can make. A clear commitment to early childhood education, specifically pre-school education would be a welcome addition to the state plan (and is existing government policy).

Whilst NCOSS supports the principle of early intervention and a strong focus on child protection, children and young people over eight years should not be forgotten in the state plan. This section of the state plan needs to include strategies to turn things around for families, beyond service interventions such as *families first* and make specific links to the 'growing prosperity' section of the plan. Well paid employment is a vital part of a more systemic approach to poverty reduction.

When discussing mental health (p.25) the draft plan does not consider who is most likely to experience the burden of mental illness. For example, mental health is a key issue for rural areas and farming communities as well as being an ongoing issue for the Aboriginal population.

The plan should provide a more robust analysis of a whole of government approach to mental health care including housing (although HASI is noted), law enforcement and general health services in working together providing prevention, early intervention and support services. Promotion of employment opportunities for people with a mental health disability is a welcome strategy.

Homelessness is only mentioned as being something experienced by people with a mental illness (p.25). This ignores the complexity and multidimensional nature of homelessness, and its impact on people experiencing family and domestic violence, people with substance abuse problems, young people experiencing family breakdown, people leaving jail or juvenile detention centres, or the shortage of appropriate affordable housing.

NSW needs an integrated strategy to reduce homelessness, to be developed in partnership with the non government sector. The Partnership Against Homelessness funds worthwhile projects, but is unable to properly address the problems of social exclusion, inadequate planning and coordination between government agencies, lack of access to support services and affordable housing, or to prevent people at risk from becoming homeless or falling into chronic homelessness. Similarly the SAAP system cannot be all things to all people and cannot hope to fill the gaps in the government human services system.

A proposal for a homelessness strategy for NSW, developed in partnership with homelessness peak bodies is attached to this submission.

NCOSS does not support the *Reshaping Public Housing* reforms (p25). Rather than producing positive results, *Reshaping* is more likely to produce worse outcomes for significant numbers of people in housing need; increased poverty traps and workforce disincentives; increased concentration of disadvantage in public housing estates and increased stigmatization of public tenants.

In particular the *Reshaping* reforms carry the significant risk that only clients of the formal service systems will be able to satisfy the eligibility criteria for social

housing. This is discriminatory and serves to medicalise the provision of housing rather than taking a holistic view of a person's need. The *Reshaping* reforms actively punish wellness and promote illness. It is not an early intervention program.

NCOSS welcomes the focus on locational disadvantage, particularly entrenched disadvantage. Overcoming entrenched disadvantage (p 26) should be a clear priority in the plan rather than just a challenge identified. We welcome a mix between early intervention and acute services but note the need for long term investment in communities. This is not clearly articulated in the draft plan despite considerable evidence that three year funding cycle interventions are too short.

NCOSS welcomes a commitment to working with the Commonwealth and in particular using the COAG agenda to take forward significant initiatives such as mental health. This model should be applied to the broader task of developing a coherent national anti poverty plan.

NCOSS welcomes the acknowledgement of the challenges around an ageing paid and volunteer workforce. However, no strategies are identified to improve workforce retention, career paths, remuneration or qualifications (other than TAFE) or of older people as a resource.

NCOSS seeks detail on what the phrase 'initiate urgent remedial strategies where a service does not meet national benchmarks' means in practice (p29).

NCOSS also seeks more detail on the cross-agency triage screening and assessment methods listed as a strategy at page 29.

NCOSS supports the roll out of additional funds for mental health previously announced. NCOSS particularly welcomes a focus on stable housing for people with mental illness (and dual diagnosis) through an expansion of the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) which were announced just prior to the state budget. NCOSS notes that HASI is not an early intervention program, at least not for the high-needs part of the program.

NCOSS welcomes a commitment to community renewal and awaits the public release of the NSW Government Community Renewal strategy. NCOSS has long expressed concern about the need to reduce locational disadvantage, especially on public housing estates. We are supportive of community regeneration efforts if they lead to measurable improvements in opportunities for low income households. We point out, however, that there is a clear contradiction in Government efforts to achieve a greater social mix on estates at the same time as it tightens the eligibility and allocation requirements for access to social housing via the *Reshaping Public Housing* Reforms. Yet these two contradictory policies are in the same draft state plan.

NCOSS strongly supports the development of regional, integrated human services plans. This method of planning should not be restricted to co-located services and should apply across the human services sector in NSW. Non government organisations should be actively engaged in these processes. A strong network of regional NGOs is required for this strategy to be fully realised.

NCOSS notes that no reference is made to carers in the state plan. This is a significant omission. NCOSS also notes that the discussion paper of the *NSW Carers Statement* (1999) is still awaiting public release.

Similarly insufficient attention is given to the working poor and in particular issues such as fuel poverty, high levels of debt and housing stress.

Growing prosperity across NSW

NCOSS supports the sound financial management of the NSW economy. Part of that fiscal prudence includes having reasonable rates of corporate taxation that ensure an adequate revenue base for the delivery of services.

NCOSS supports an economic environment that promotes an investment and sustainability agenda. In particular we support a regulatory environment that provides adequate protection for our environmental and social well being.

NCOSS agrees that a growing economy typified by well paid employment can deliver significant social benefits to the people of NSW.

Economic growth is not an end in itself. It is important because it creates good jobs, which in turn enable us to improve our living standards and opportunities. We need to measure economic progress by focusing on the number and quality of jobs and in particular the growth of those jobs in more disadvantaged communities.

NCOSS also welcomes a focus on strengthening rural and regional economies, however this means more than just government jobs and tourism. NCOSS is disappointed that the draft plan has no real discussion of rural disadvantage apart from the drought context. For example, no mention is made as to retaining young people in rural towns when it is clearly known that education opportunities, (and relevance), transport, facilities and jobs are key drivers of young people leaving rural NSW.

A clearer link to infrastructure and services needs to be made in this part of the plan so that a more integrated, whole of government approach to rural development and sustainability can be achieved.

NCOSS welcomes the focus on skills development in this section. Enhancing the TAFE sector must be a key strategy for this part of the plan. However the

strategies do not strengthen TAFE, despite Cert III qualifications being the proposed indicator of success.

The priorities section should also make reference to the third sector of the economy – the non-government sector.

In particular, no mention is made of developing a comprehensive sector development and workforce strategy for non government human services, even though our industry faces challenges as significant as the public sector. The situation in rural NSW is particularly bad.

NSW needs a state-wide non government sector development strategy informed by a comprehensive whole of community sector needs analysis. This should be a priority in the plan. The strategy should take the long view of capacity building and include a minimum implementation phase of five years. All human service agencies that have funded NGO programs would be expected to contribute to the development, funding and implementation of the strategy, which could be developed under the principles contained in the *Working Together for NSW Agreement* between the NSW Government and the Human Services NGO sector.

This should be included as a priority in the plan. The result should be a well resourced, highly functional non-government sector with increased capacity to deliver on its service delivery, policy, advocacy and community development objectives.

NCOSS supports measures to promote land use for employment lands under the Metropolitan Strategy, without risking environmental and planning protections.

NCOSS seeks clarification and detail as to the strategy that 'the Expenditure Review Committee will be expanded to include the review of regulations'. NCOSS is concerned that proper checks and balances continue to be undertaken as regards the regulatory framework in NSW. Many of the regulatory requirements (such as health and safety, planning, environment etc) are of particular importance to low income people and communities and should not be lost in a desire to reduce 'red tape'.

Environment for living

NCOSS welcomes a commitment to environmental sustainability and in particular to triple bottom line reporting (economic, social and environmental) in the state plan.

Land use is intrinsically tied to current patterns of disadvantage. To minimize the likelihood of further entrenching patterns of poverty and social exclusion, equity considerations must also permeate this section of the plan.

NCOSS is disappointed that throughout the document no acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land is made. Nor is there any discussion about how the State Plan will align with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's ways of doing business about their country. No indication is given regarding the government's strategy for engaging with community leaders on land use and sustainability issues under the plan.

Securing our energy supply is mentioned but there is no discussion of fuel poverty or the impact of greater expenditure on energy infrastructure which will be passed on to consumers in the form of higher electricity tariffs. NCOSS supports the BASIX index and notes that more work needs to be done to retrofit existing stock that was built prior to BASIX.

NCOSS also notes the omission of Universal Housing design from the plan. Universal housing stock is an important means of ensuring a supply of housing that meets changing demographics.

NCOSS welcomes the focus on liveability in the draft plan and would like to see clearer links drawn across health and wellbeing indicators in this part of the plan and the remainder of the plan, specifically the better services section. Tackling poverty and disadvantage is an important component of ensuring liveability and well being for our community.

While the recent property boom has increased the wealth of many households, it has worsened housing affordability for others. Given that access to secure, affordable and appropriate housing is a key requirement for effective participation in the social, educational and economic life of the community, the plan should include a clear target to reduce the number of low to moderate income households (home purchasers and renters) who are experiencing housing stress.

The Premier has promised to release an affordable housing strategy, and this must be released before the State Plan can be finalised.

Improving affordability requires a significant expansion of affordable housing rental stock, not just an enhanced land release program on Sydney's urban fringe as suggested at page 41. 'Supply of land for housing increases' is not the correct indicator. Housing affordability is a preferred measure of success. Housing affordability is one of the most significant challenges our state faces - resolving it should cut across all aspects of the state plan.

NCOSS welcomes the commitment to move 'a significant proportion' of freight containers from roads to rail but believes the State Plan should contain specific targets and timeframes for doing so (or refer to the plan where these are detailed)

The draft plan commits to promoting integrated land use and transport planning but the specific means by which this is to occur is not clarified. We note that draft State Environmental Planning Policy 66 (Integration of Land Use and Transport) was released for comment in 2001 but has not been gazetted to date.

There is a commitment to partner with local government in the use and development of public land to support community needs but no specific details are provided. The provision of both capital and recurrent resources for essential community facilities through a mixture of developer levies and consolidated revenue is a key strategy for ensuring adequate infrastructure and promoting well being in new communities. Its status as a strategy for putting in place the building blocks of community should be recognized in the plan.

NCOSS makes the general observation that the role of local government in the draft plan is marginalised into a land use and planning function. Local government is often a driving force for community development in local areas as well as an important provider of human services. A clearer role in the plan for local government, as well as non government organisations would significantly improve the plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NCOSS recommends

1. That the state plan be prefaced with a clear vision statement that includes a commitment to the 'ongoing improvement in the living standards and wellbeing of all NSW residents, including those people and communities currently experiencing disadvantage and social exclusion'.
2. That the state plan include an overarching statement of values which includes:
 - Recognition and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as our first peoples;
 - Respect for the dignity and human rights of all people in NSW;
 - A commitment to the full and effective participation of all people in society; and
 - Compassion and support.
3. That the state plan include a clear commitment to realize 'in partnership with Aboriginal communities, a significant improvement in the living standards of Aboriginal people in NSW'
4. That success measures on overcoming disadvantage be included in the plan (either from existing policy or specific to the state plan). These should include measurable improvements in life expectancy, health, education, employment, housing, transport and legal outcomes, at least up to state average.
5. That a specific new theme, 'A Fairer Society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity' be included in the plan with a small number of key actions that the NSW Government can take (or significantly influence)
6. That associated performance measures for reducing disadvantage be included in the plan. (see suggested indicators in detailed submission and in revised state plans summary)
7. That the State Plan contains a clear commitment to strong and sustainable local communities, in which specific roles and actions of government and NGOs are included. Potentially this could be included under the proposed theme of 'A Fairer Society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity.'
8. That the importance of community development as processes for building community resilience and involving people in the decisions that affect their lives be clearly stated in the plan.

9. That the State Plan adopts a strengths based approach which enables rather than labels. For example the full and effective participation of older people, young people and people with disability in all aspects of society should be promoted through the plan.
10. That the State Plan includes a set of performance measures (measures of success) which are appropriate, meaningful and easy to use and understand.
11. That the measures of success relate to each of the priorities in the plan which in turn clearly demonstrate that they will improve the living standards and wellbeing of all citizens.
12. That whilst ensuring the document is not too long, the State Plan explains where intersections occur with other more detailed plans, e.g. City of Cities , Two Ways Together, Aboriginal Education Plan.
13. That the State Plan does not weaken key benchmarks identified in these existing plans.

Plan ahead

14. That the broad institutional framework detailed in the draft plan be implemented, however more detail is needed on how accountability for results will work in practice.
15. That lead responsibility for the State Plan's implementation across government agencies rest with the Premiers Department.
16. That an annual progress report be tabled to Parliament by the Premier.
17. That public agency Annual Reports are refined so that each agency reports on its progress of achievements against the Plan's goals (where applicable).
18. That Auditor General's reports include a statement of performance against the state plan.
19. That Governmental oversight be undertaken by the Cabinet Social Justice Committee, with advice from the Social Justice Reference Group.

Respect and responsibility

20. The 'Respect and Responsibility' theme be re-named to 'Safe, vibrant and harmonious communities' or alternatively 'Rights, responsibility and respect'.

21. That specific reference is made to protecting and promoting human rights as this is a key responsibility of government.
22. That within the priority of reducing violent crime, specific reference is made to domestic violence, family violence, sexual assault and elder abuse.
23. That the plan includes a priority around an improved and integrated response to these types of violence. (Noting that we may need to see reporting rates go up before we can see the response rate improve over time)
24. That the priority of reduced levels of re-offending be amended to include reduced levels of recidivism.
25. That the plan includes a success measure based on lowering the recidivism rate across the corrections and juvenile justice systems.
26. That the plan also include a success measure based on lowering the proportion of people in contact with the criminal justice system (including the juvenile justice system) who have an intellectual or other form of disability, including mental illness.
27. That the strategy of supporting police be amended to read 'to continue to support the police force, backed up with appropriate powers and latest technology.'
28. That a priority under harmonious communities be the development and implementation of a statewide anti racism strategy including responses to systemic discrimination, racial violence and racial and religious vilification.
29. Harmonious communities priorities (and associated measures) should also include reducing systemic discrimination, violence and vilification against Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Inter-sex communities and people with a disability
30. That the priority of 'increasing access to justice for all' be added to the plan.

Improving services

31. That the theme 'Improving Services' be amended to read 'improving public and community services'.

32. That the priority 'better quality services' be amended to read 'better, more accessible, affordable and appropriate services.'
33. That increased provision of adequate interpreter and translation services for people with disabilities and persons from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds be included as a priority in the plan so that they can access services in common with fellow NSW residents.
34. That the plan states that health services include mental health, oral health and preventative services
35. That the priorities for health be amended to include:
- Reducing health inequity through a focus on the social determinants of health
 - Improving health outcomes of Aboriginal people
 - Increased investment in oral health
 - Improved access to health services for people in rural, regional and remote NSW
 - Enhancing the effectiveness of the interface between the health and community care system for an aging population
 - Improved access to health services for CALD communities including refugees.
36. That additional success indicators for health should include:
- The elimination of health status inequities, so that the difference between life expectancy at birth in low income and rural health areas would be equal to or better than the state average life expectancy at birth
 - Bringing Aboriginal health outcomes in line with health outcomes for the general community
 - Increased life expectancy for Aboriginal men and women due to improved health, coming in line with general non-Aboriginal life expectancies.
37. That the priorities for education be amended to include:
- Ensuring universal, affordable access to preschool/prior to school experience at least two days per week
 - Reducing truancy and suspension through improved curriculum relevance and support

- Improving the transition between primary and high school, and high school to work
- Improving education outcomes of Aboriginal children and young people
- Improving life long learning across the community

38. That the year 12 retention rate measure be adopted, however this should also include population group data including young people with a disability

39. That additional measures of success for education should include:

- A reduction in the proportion of early school leavers who are unemployed, including those from rural NSW
- Meeting education outcome targets in the Aboriginal Education Plan
- Increasing proportion of people with disability and older people accessing and completing TAFE, vocational training and other further education

40. That the priorities under transport be amended to include:

- Optimising connectivity between homes, jobs, community participation and transport
- Promoting affordable and accessible public transport options
- Increasing public transport's share of all work-related commuting, (not just commuting at peak hours).

41. That success measures for transport include:

- That working people pay no more than 20% of their net income on transport (10% for people on fixed incomes or low paid employment)

Compassion and support for the most vulnerable

42. That the words compassion and support for the most vulnerable be replaced with 'promoting full and effective participation in the community' and that this sits as a priority under the new theme of 'A fairer NSW that tackles disadvantage and respects diversity'.

43. That this new theme include the following priorities:

- Enabling full and effective participation (as above)
- Promoting strong and sustainable communities through community development and long term investment
- Overcoming locational disadvantage
- Improving the concessions system to help the working poor
- Effective transitioning from acute services across human services
- A comprehensive homelessness strategy for NSW
- Improved recognition and support for Carers
- Protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect

44. That this new theme incorporate the following measures of success:

- Increased labour force and social participation of people with a disability, people with a mental illness and other population groups (measured through ABS data)
- Improvements in community well being and reductions in social deprivation in locations of entrenched disadvantage (measured by Vinson index and ABS data)
- Reduction in the proportion of children experiencing abuse and neglect (measured by Child Protection Notifications, pick up of unallocated cases should also be included as a quality measure)
- Improvements in the out of home care system for those children who do experience abuse and neglect (measured by Out of Home Care placement stability and breakdown rates).
- Reduction in readmission into custodial, acute or homelessness services amongst ex-prisoners, juvenile justice clients, children and young people coming out of care and other points of transition from acute services including mental health (measured by SAAP data including turn away rates).
- Reduction in unmet need for HACC services (HACC, HomeCare, supported accommodation waiting list data)
- Reduction in homelessness across NSW, including hidden homelessness (measured by AIHW data and ABS)

45. That 'Reshaping public housing' is deleted from the list of strategies.

46. That the existing strategy of 'allocate social housing to the most vulnerable' be deleted.

Growing prosperity across NSW

47. That the wording of the theme be amended to read 'growing prosperity for all'.

48. Priorities under this theme should also include:

- Promoting business development initiatives in depressed regional economies where employment and vocational training assistance can be directly targeted to disadvantaged population groups.
- Enhancing the TAFE sector
- The development and implementation of a sector development strategy for the non government human services sector, including a comprehensive workforce development strategy.

49. Measures of success should include:

- Greater shares of full time jobs in local government areas where employment participation rates are currently below state average
- Reduction in proportion of workforce on minimum wages
- Improved workforce retention rates in non government human services

50. That the strategy of returning to surplus by meeting savings targets be removed where such savings would have a negative effect on low income, disadvantaged people, families or communities (thereby contradicting the theme of a Fairer NSW that tackles).

Environment for living

51. That protecting the environment for future generations be emphasized by amending the name of this theme to 'a sustainable environment for living'.

52. That the role of the traditional owners of the land as guardians and custodians of the land, including the living environment be clearly acknowledged.

53. That the priorities be amended to include:

- Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples with an associated desired outcome of active involvement of that community in the protection of our environment
- Improving the level and locations of affordable housing to rent or buy (including social and community housing)
- Increasing the supply of universal housing
- Reducing green house emissions
- Supporting the development of public transport to reduce car use across the state
- Promoting participation in community, recreational and cultural activities

54. That the measures of success should also include:

- Community feedback that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel actively involved in the planning and decision making process
- Reduction in proportion of NSW residents experiencing housing stress (paying more than 30% income in housing costs (data sources include AHURI and ABS)
- Reduction in share of trips by car

REVISED SUMMARY OF STATE PLAN

NSW State Plan

Vision: The ongoing improvement in the living standards and wellbeing of all NSW residents, including those people and communities currently experiencing disadvantage and social exclusion.

Statement of Values:

- Recognition and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as our first peoples;
- Respect for the dignity and human rights of all people in NSW;
- A commitment to the full and effective participation of all people in society; and
- Compassion and support for people in need.

Plan what we do	Report regularly and involve the community	Do what we plan	Measures of success
<p>Evidence based policies</p> <p>Integrate with existing plans, eg. Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, Disability Plan</p> <p>Clear measures of success</p> <p>Review in 2009</p>	<p>Public reporting of progress against outcomes</p> <p>Ongoing community participation</p> <p>Work effectively with the private sector and non-government organisations to deliver our goals</p> <p>External governance</p>	<p>Lead responsibility for the State Plan's implementation across government agencies rest with the Premiers Department.</p> <p>Increased accountability for Ministers and CEOs for achieving goals</p> <p>Reform Government and budgetary processes to drive progress against plan</p>	<p>Performance agreements</p> <p>Public agencies Annual Reports include progress of achievements against the Plan's goals (where applicable).</p> <p>Annual progress report tabled to Parliament by the Premier.</p> <p>Oversight by the Cabinet Social Justice Committee, with advice from the Social Justice Reference Group</p> <p>Auditor General's reports include a statement of performance against the state plan.</p>

Themes	Sub-themes	Priorities	Measures of success
Safe, vibrant and harmonious communities	Keeping people safe by tackling the causes and consequences of crime	<p>1. Reduction in violent crime and improved support for victims, including improved and integrated response to domestic violence, family violence, sexual assault and elder abuse</p> <p>2. Minimising re-offending and recidivism</p> <p>3. Reducing contact of people with disability and mental illness with criminal justice system</p> <p>4. Support the police force with appropriate powers and latest technology</p>	<p>1. Reduced rates of crime, particularly violent crime,</p> <p>2. Reduced re-offending and significantly lower recidivism rates across adult and juvenile justice</p> <p>3. Lower proportion of people in contact with the criminal justice system (including the juvenile justice system) who have an intellectual or other form of disability, including mental illness.</p>
	Tackling anti-social behaviour	5. Local crime prevention strategies including community development and intergenerational programs	4. Lower perception/fear of crime via surveys
	Building harmonious communities	<p>6. Improving social cohesion and community resilience</p> <p>7. State wide anti racism strategy including responses to systemic discrimination, racial violence and racial and religious vilification</p>	<p>5. Increased number of NSW residents report that they have a stake in the community and have a chance to participate and contribute (ABS data).</p> <p>6. Reduction in complaints of discrimination (including systemic) violence and vilification against Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, GLBTI, people with a disability</p>
	Protecting and promoting human rights	8. Increasing access to justice for all	7. Proportion legal problems resolved increases (Legal Aid)

<p>Improving public and community services</p>	<p>Better, more accessible, affordable and appropriate services Health (including include mental health, oral health and preventative services).</p>	<p>9. Reducing health inequity through a focus on the social determinants of health</p> <p>10. Improving health outcomes of Aboriginal people</p> <p>11. Increased investment in oral health</p> <p>12. Improved access to health services for people in rural, regional and remote NSW</p> <p>13. Improved access to health services for CALD communities including refugees</p> <p>14. Enhancing the effectiveness of the interface between the health and community care system for an aging population</p> <p>15. Improved health through reduced obesity, smoking and risk drinking</p>	<p>8. Elimination of health status inequities (life expectancy at birth in low income and rural health areas equal to or better than the state average life expectancy at birth)</p> <p>9. Bringing Aboriginal health outcomes in line with health outcomes for the general community (including life expectancy)</p> <p>10. Health services meet key national benchmarks for access and quality</p> <p>11. Reduce avoidable hospital admissions</p>
	<p>Education</p>	<p>16. Ensuring universal, affordable access to pre school/prior to school experience two days per week</p> <p>17. Reducing truancy and suspension through improved curriculum relevance and support.</p> <p>18. Improving the transition between primary and high school, and high school to work</p> <p>19. Improving education outcomes of Aboriginal children and young people</p>	<p>12. Increased proportion of children with skills for life and learning at school entry</p> <p>13. A reduction in the proportion of early school leavers who are unemployed, including those from rural NSW</p> <p>14. Meeting education outcomes targets in the Aboriginal Education Plan</p>

		20. Improving life long learning across the community	15. More students meet or exceed key national benchmarks for attainment 16. More students completing year 12 or equivalent across NSW (including young people with disability) 17. Increasing proportion of people with disability and older people accessing and completing TAFE, vocational training and other further education
	Transport	21. Optimising connectivity between homes, jobs, community participation and transport 22. Promoting affordable and accessible public transport options 23. Safer roads	18. Increase in public transport's share of all work-related commuting 19. Public transport meets reliability and safety targets 20. That working people pay no more than 20% of their net income on transport (10% for people on fixed incomes or low paid employment) 21. Road toll reduced relative to total journeys
	Early Intervention	24. Increased proportion of budget dedicated to prevention and early intervention	22. Budget estimates (spend and outcomes)

	Customer friendly services	25. Provision of adequate interpreter and translation services for people with disabilities and persons from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds	23. Increased usage by PWD and CALD backgrounds 24. Increased customer satisfaction with all Government services
A Fairer Society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity	Promoting full and effective participation in the community'	26. Promoting strong and sustainable communities through community development and long term investment 27. In partnership with Aboriginal communities, a significant improvement in the living standards of Aboriginal people in NSW 28. Overcoming locational disadvantage 29. Improving the concessions system to help the working poor	25. Increased labour force and social participation of people with a disability, people with a mental illness and other population groups (measured through ABS data) 26. Improvements in community well being and reductions in social deprivation in locations of entrenched disadvantage (measured by Vinson index and ABS data)
	Providing support where its needed	30. Effective transitioning from acute services across human services (so people don't fall through the cracks) 31. A comprehensive homelessness strategy for NSW 32. Improved recognition and support for Carers 33. Protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect	27. Reduction in readmission into custodial, acute or homelessness services amongst ex-prisoners, juvenile justice clients, children and young people coming out of care and other points of transition from acute services including mental health (measured by SAAP data including turn away rates). 28. Reduction in unmet need for HACC services (HACC, HomeCare, supported accommodation waiting list data)

			<p>29. Reduction in homelessness across NSW, including hidden homelessness (measured by AIHW data and ABS)</p> <p>30. Reduced rate of child abuse and neglect across NSW (measured by Child Protection Notifications, pick up of unallocated cases should also be included as a quality measure)</p> <p>31. Improvements in the out of home care system for those children who do experience abuse and neglect (measured by Out of Home Care placement stability and breakdown rates).</p>
Growing prosperity for all across NSW	NSW Open for Business	34. Sound financial management and increased business investment	32. AAA rating maintained

	More rewarding, higher skilled jobs	<p>35. More people with accredited skills</p> <p>36. Promoting business development initiatives in depressed regional economies where employment and vocational training assistance can be directly targeted to disadvantaged population groups.</p> <p>37. Enhancing the TAFE sector</p> <p>38. The development and implementation of a sector development strategy for the non government human services sector, including a comprehensive workforce development strategy.</p>	<p>33. Increasing the total productivity of the NSW economy</p> <p>34. Greater shares of full time jobs in local government areas where employment participation rates are currently below state average</p> <p>35. Reduction in proportion of workforce on minimum wages</p> <p>36. Improved workforce retention rates in human services</p>
	Strengthening rural and regional economies	39. Growing the skills base and increased business investment in rural, regional and remote NSW	<p>37. More business investment in rural NSW</p> <p>38. Increasing number of working age people in RRR NSW possessing a AQF Certificate III or above</p>
A sustainable environment for living	Practical environmental solutions	<p>40. Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the protection of our environment.</p> <p>41. Reducing green house emissions.</p> <p>42. Electricity and water suppliers meet reliability performance standards</p>	<p>40. Community reports actively engaged in planning and environment processes</p> <p>41. Cleaner air that meets national air quality standards and greenhouse targets</p> <p>42. Improved natural environment that meets Natural Resources Commission targets for water, native vegetation, land and biodiversity</p>

	Improved urban environment and improved mobility	<p>43. Supporting the development of public transport to reduce car use across the state.</p> <p>44. Improving the level and locations of affordable housing to rent or buy (including social and community housing).</p> <p>45. Increasing the supply of universal housing</p>	<p>43. Reduction in share of trips by car</p> <p>44. Increased proportion of freight on rail</p> <p>45. Reduction in proportion of NSW residents experiencing housing stress (paying more than 30% income in housing costs (data sources include AHURI and ABS)</p>
	Opportunities for recreation	46. Promoting participation in community, recreational and cultural activities	46. More people using parks, reserves, cultural, sporting and recreational facilities
