

South West Sydney Regional Consultation Report

16 November 2013



Hosted by the Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) and Sector Connect

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ABOUT NCOSS

The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) is the peak body for the non-government community services sector in New South Wales (NSW).

NCOSS provides independent and informed policy development and advice, and provides coordination and leadership for the non-government community services sector in NSW. NCOSS works with our members on behalf of disadvantaged people and communities towards achieving social justice in NSW.

More information is available on the NCOSS website at www.ncoss.org.au

ABOUT SECTOR CONNECT

Sector Connect is the peak organisation representing not for profit organisations in the Macarthur and Wingecarribee regions. Sector Connect works to ensure the needs and issues of Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly and Wingecarribee are heard at regional, state and federal level.

More information is available on the Sector Connect website at <http://www.sectorconnect.org.au>

BACKGROUND

The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) regularly holds community consultations in rural and regional NSW. The aim of the NCOSS regional visits is to:

- Gather information on social issues in regional, rural and remote areas to inform NCOSS policy and advocacy
- Provide information about the work that NCOSS does; and
- Build relationships between NCOSS, non-government services providers and other local services providers.

The information collected during the consultations informs NCOSS on-going policy and advocacy work, including:

- Submissions to the NSW Government and its agencies;
- Advocacy with members of parliament and government agencies; and
- Policy development, such as the annual NCOSS Pre-Budget Submission.

The November 2013 South West Sydney Regional Consultation was held in partnership with Sector Connect.

1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents a summary of the issues raised at a community consultation held by NCOSS in partnership with Sector Connect at Ingleburn Community Hall on 19 November 2013. Approximately 36 representatives from the community services sector and from government agencies attended the consultation.

Prior to the consultation forum, participants were asked to highlight the issues they saw as:

- (1) Impacting people experiencing disadvantage in the local area;
- (2) Impacting service delivery.

A list of these issues is included at Appendix 1.

The forum itself concentrated on the relationship between transport and social disadvantage. The report below provides a summary of the issues discussed on the day and incorporates the transport issues raised during the pre-consultation feedback.

NCOSS will use the information contained in this report to inform our ongoing social policy and advocacy work. Participants are also encouraged to use this information in their own advocacy activities with local politicians, local councils, and funding bodies, or to support local advocacy campaigns.

2 SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED

2.1 Morning Session

The morning session included a presentation on the relationship between transport and social disadvantage. During the presentation, forum participants were given the opportunity to raise transport-related issues they observed affecting people experiencing poverty and disadvantage in South West Sydney. The summary below outlines the issues raised both during the presentation and during the pre-consultation feedback.

Transport Accessibility and Availability

In relation to the accessibility and availability of transport, the following issues were raised:

- Services are concentrated in Campbelltown (including transport services) with a lack of public transport in more remote areas (e.g. Buxton, Yanderra, Thirlmere) and poor connections between suburbs.
- Transport options don't accommodate entire journey.
- There is limited transport at night.
- There is a need for transport that is suitable for older people/people with disability.

- Transport links to TAFE are poor. This makes it difficult/impossible to access educational opportunities, particularly when people have other commitments such as caring responsibilities.
- Some educational institutions have begun running their own bus services, meaning there is reduced patronage on public services.
- People are becoming socially isolated as there is a lack of funding to address transport disadvantage, with clients unable to access a range of services (e.g. make appointments, receive treatment, undertake training).
- Huge population growth is underway, but investment in transport services has not kept pace with this growth hence the area is becoming increasingly car dependent.
- There is a lack of clear guidelines and standards and adequate support around transport to school for children with disability (for example, some children are not allowed to travel without a carer).

Transport Affordability

In relation to the affordability of transport, the following issues were raised:

- Public transport fares are expensive, especially for people who live in outer villages and for people on low incomes.
- Young people who are on youth allowance spend up to a quarter of their income on transport.
- Young people without ID who are travelling on a concession ticket are being fined.
- The Taxi Transport Subsidy Service is expensive, particularly for those who live in regional areas and who must travel long distances. Also many people are not eligible for the scheme but do not have alternative means of transport.
- People who live in the Northern part of Wollondilly Shire can buy Pensioner Excursion Tickets, (\$2.50 all day travel on any mode anywhere in Sydney City) while those who live in South Wollondilly can only purchase Regional Excursion Daily Tickets (which can only be used within the local bus network).
- Services may be funded to provide transport but the cost is prohibitive due to geography and demographics of the region.
- The cost of transport is not factored in for older people on packages.

Health Transport

In relation to health transport, the following issues were raised:

- There is a lack of non-emergency health-related transport, and clients have difficulty accessing cancer treatment, dialysis, physiotherapy appointments etc.
- Using community transport to get to health appointments can be very expensive.
- Some people are not eligible for community transport but have no alternative options.
- Public transport connections to hospitals, nursing homes are poor.

- People who are discharged at night have no transport home. It was suggested that hospitals could provide taxi vouchers for people who are discharged at night.
- Community transport does not have the capacity to transport people who are morbidly obese. Participants in program at Camden Hospital have not way to get to program.
- The centralisation of services means that more people need to travel into the centre of Sydney for treatment.

2.2 Afternoon Session

During the afternoon session participants were asked to break into groups and select an issue raised during the morning consultation session for more in depth discussion. The activity involved identifying a change they would like to see in relation to their selected issue, and describing how that change might be achieved.

The ideas generated during this session are summarised below. After each group had presented their idea, participants were asked to nominate those ideas they felt should be pursued as a priority. There was strong support for establishing a transport committee/forum in South West Sydney (Groups One and Five) followed by support for improving health transport (Group Two) and developing a shuttle service for residents in large housing estates (Group Seven).

Group One: Transport Committee

Group One proposed seeking support for a local transport stakeholder group, with representatives potentially including service providers, peak bodies, councillors, planners, local MPs. The group would facilitate an honest and realistic appraisal of community needs, and would represent the community in lobbying to achieve outcomes.

Group Two: Community transport meets health needs

Group Two proposed lobbying relevant decision-makers for the resources necessary to meet the need for health transport. Relevant stakeholders identified included local MPs, Health Services, the Ministry of Health, ADHC, DSS, the Minister of Transport, Federal Members, Local Services, Medicare Locals, GPs, Local Business, NCOSS.

Group Three: Outreach hub opens

Group Three suggested that the centralisation of services (including transport) was leading to an increased need for transport that could be alleviated if service provision in outlying towns and villages was improved. They suggested that there should be an obligation for services to provide outreach.

Group Four: Bridging the gap for South West Sydney youth

Group Four suggested a number of initiatives that would contribute to meeting the transport needs of young people in South West Sydney. These included:

- Bike initiatives: Bikeracks on buses; Bikeshare schemes (e.g. Melbourne and Overseas)
- Car sharing initiatives: GoGet, Carpooling

- Free driving lessons (community services in exchange for driving lessons)
- Initiatives to address affordability issues: fuel subsidies, insurance discounts, rating system
- A transport Facebook page

Group 5: Integrated Transport Forum (South West Sydney)

Group Five proposed developing an Integrated Transport Forum that would facilitate local participation in the development of transport policy and in the design and delivery of transport services. Steps involved in ensuring the forum's effectiveness would include forming a structure for participation, establishing a profile, identifying a priority issue or 'story', and working to bring stakeholders together.

Group Six: Free Driving Lessons

Group Six proposed addressing the difficulties young people faced in obtaining their drivers licences by tapping into existing services. Currently, Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative (MDSI) has a program that supports young people experiencing disadvantage to achieve the mandatory 120 hours driving requirement. It was suggested that a similar service could be extended to areas outside the major regional centres, and that young people could volunteer or work in exchange for driving lessons.

Group Seven: Shuttle Bus

Group Seven proposed piloting a shuttle service providing a grocery run to Claymore residents, and extending this service to Airds and Minto if successful. It was suggested that Clubs NSW or supermarkets could be approached to provide funding for such a service.

Group Eight: Affordable, comfortable transport on a regular basis for social inclusion

Group Eight proposed working in partnership with both the community and business sector to develop new transport services to meet identified needs within the community. This might involve working with a range of organisations – such as clubs, businesses, councils, community groups – to make better use of existing transport resources; exploring partnerships and collaborative approaches; and identifying opportunities for revenue-raising (e.g. sponsorship).

3 CONCLUSION

NCOSS thanks all of the participants who attended the consultation and contributed to the discussions. We also thank Sector Connect for their assistance in arranging and facilitating the consultation event.

NCOSS will use the information gathered during the consultation to write to local Members of Parliament, NSW Government agencies and local Councils to alert them to priority issues in the local area. This information will also feed in to NCOSS on-going social policy and advocacy work throughout the year.

APPENDIX 1: KEY THEMES

On registering for the NCOSS Regional Consultation in South West Sydney, participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

- What do you see as the top two issues impacting people experiencing disadvantage in your local area?
- What are the top two issues impacting service delivery experienced by your organisation?

Below is a summary of responses received, grouped by theme.

Employment and training

- Lack of local jobs
- Lack of child care for people accessing training opportunities
- Education and training opportunities don't match employment opportunities

Housing

- Lack of affordable housing
- Long public housing waiting lists
- Stigmatisation of people living on housing estates

Health

- Lack of access to services and information
- Lack of specialist medical and psychiatric services
- Without transport, problems with accessing health services and preventing hospital admission
- Cost of specialist services
- Access to food

Financial pressures

- For older people
- For people with disability
- Low income earners
- Rising cost of living
- High cost of transport fares

Transport

- Lack of non-emergency health related transport
- Lack of funding/services for transport disadvantaged
- Lack of public transport in more remote areas of the region

- Poor connections between suburbs
- Clients unable to make appointments/receive treatment/undertake training or experiencing social isolation because of inadequate transport
- Limited public transport options at night impacting on young people
- Transport options that don't accommodate a person's entire journey
- Lack of transport options contributes to isolation and remoteness
- Lack of affordability/impact of expensive fares especially for outer villages
- Problems for young people without ID travelling on concession fares and getting fined
- Services may be funded to provide transport but the cost is prohibitive because of the geography and demographics of the region
- The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme needs to increase
- More accessible transport so that people with disabilities/older people are not socially isolated; increase access to work, sport and other opportunities

Health transport

- Community transport for health purposes – can charge by distance which is expensive and not available for some (eg: patients receiving treatment for chronic diseases such as cancer)
- Services may be funded to provide transport but the cost is prohibitive because of the geography and demographics of the region
- Lack of non-emergency health related transport – clients can have trouble accessing cancer treatment, dialysis, physio etc.
- Lack of access by public transport to hospitals, nursing homes etc.
- The centralisation of services means that more people need to travel into the centre of Sydney for treatment.

Service delivery, funding and workforce issues

- Geographic constraints servicing a community made up of a number of remote towns and villages
- Financial viability and funding uncertainty
- Growing number of clients requiring assistance
- Increase in severity and complexity of cases
- Limited availability of services/slowness in responding/growing waiting lists
- Cutbacks/decreased funding pool/increased competition for grants
- Boundary restrictions – clients must live in the right geographical area
- Funding and resourcing restrictions
- Transitioning from block funding to person centred funding
- Strengthening the disability workforce – recruitment and retention issues
- Reliance on volunteers