



What we heard

Insights and actions from NCOSS community consultations 2017



Executive Summary

At NCOSS, our agenda is shaped by our members and the communities they serve. We know that these communities have the solutions to the problems they face.

In July and August 2017 we toured the state hearing directly from metropolitan, regional, rural and remote communities about their priorities. Over this period we have engaged with hundreds of community and health services, on the ground leaders and people doing it tough.

This report is a compilation of the issues we heard about during our consultations. We present the breadth of insights and solutions offered by communities, and outline the actions we have taken or will take to respond to these priorities. We give you opportunities to connect with us and continue to shape the work we do.

The solutions we heard would make an immediate difference to communities formed the basis of our *Pre-Budget Submission 2018/19*. We will continue to build on the insights from these consultations as we work towards a NSW free of poverty and inequality.

Health

We heard that too many people aren't receiving the right healthcare and support at the right time because of limited access to services and rising costs. These themes were particularly highlighted in relation to mental health, dental health, childhood obesity and alcohol and other drugs (AOD). Regional, rural and remote communities face the added challenge of needing to travel long distances for healthcare.

Communities emphasised the need to drive solutions to healthcare, taking a flexible approach that recognises the intersecting nature of many health issues (for example, we heard that it was important to incorporate dental health and hygiene programs into AOD services). Collaboration and partnership between services was also highlighted as a crucial element of tackling childhood obesity.

Disability

Communities told us the NSW mainstream service system needs to be responsive to people with disability, whether or not they are eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). We heard about the gaps in services and supports for people with disability that will be created with the closure of the Department of Ageing and Disability and Homecare (ADHC) in June 2018, while there is simultaneously a shortage of qualified workers to assist those who are eligible for support.

We heard that accessible transport and housing, as well as more opportunities to participate in the local community are important elements of building an inclusive society for people with disability.

Members emphasised a strategy needs to be developed to ensure people ineligible for the NDIS remain supported. They emphasised that disability must become a whole of Government responsibility. Communities also identified targeted improvements in accessible housing and transport as key priorities for immediate action, particularly in regional areas.

Children, Young People and Families

We heard that whole of community approaches are needed to address the issues faced by children, young people and their families in relation to health, education, housing, connectedness and safety.



Communities emphasised that vulnerable families face barriers accessing supports immediately after pregnancy, and that many disadvantaged children are missing out on vital early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Across the state, we heard concern about the lack of distinct responses to children experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV), as well as the increased number of young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Communities told us that targeted resources are required to address these issues, and that children and young people should be specifically considered in the development of policy responses. Solutions need to be particularly sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Women

Across the state, we heard that the underrepresentation of women in the workforce creates a cycle of disadvantage and a feminised picture of poverty. Women are less financially secure than men, resulting in lower savings and superannuation later in life. Communities highlighted that due to this cycle of disadvantage, there are increasing numbers of women who are homeless or at risk of housing stress, including those escaping domestic violence.

We heard strongly that whole of Government and cross-sectoral responses are needed to address these issues. For example, our members told us that we need a consortium of solutions targeting education, government and business reforms to ensure women have equal access to employment opportunities. Communities highlighted the importance of services being funded to take a holistic approach; such as DFV support and prevention that meets the housing, health and legal needs of women.

Housing

Communities emphasised that housing affordability was a major concern, both in terms of purchasing and renting, and that current policy settings do not support reform. We also heard the private rental market is highly insecure, and is simply not a viable option for many people due to lack of affordability and access. Our members were concerned about increasing numbers pushed onto homelessness due a lack of appropriate support.

There was widespread consensus that we need a significant and sustained increase in social housing stock, together with a suite of policies to increase the availability and accessibility of affordable housing. In terms of policy settings, members favoured investment in 'housing first' approaches appropriate to the needs of particular cohorts at risk of homelessness, and strongly supported the introduction of inclusionary zoning. Finally, there needs to be greater focus on accessibility across all models of housing.

Justice

We heard that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people with complex needs experience barriers accessing effective justice and exercising their rights in the legal system. Services providing legal assistance to disadvantaged people are stretched and under-resourced, impacting on their ability to meet the needs of their clients. Communities told us the criminal justice system is increasingly and inappropriately being used to deal with people with drug and alcohol and housing problems because of a specific lack of culturally appropriate support services to meet the unique needs of Aboriginal people.

Communities emphasised that more needs to be invested in services and programs that divert vulnerable people at every point in the justice process, from contact with the police, to attending court, to entering and exiting custody. Further, meeting the legal needs of disadvantaged groups has to be a major priority of justice policy in NSW, given that a substantial proportion of legal matters are concentrated within these groups.



Health

Introduction

Everyone has the right to quality healthcare, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, culture, where we live or our socioeconomic background. Good health enables us to access more opportunities in life, realise our full potential and make meaningful contributions to our communities.

But rising costs, long waiting lists and limited access to services means too many people aren't receiving the right care and support at the right time. Communities told us this is especially the case in areas of mental health, alcohol and other drugs, childhood obesity and oral health. We also heard that needing to travel long distances for healthcare is a particular challenge for regional and remote communities.

What can you do?

Across NSW we heard about the types of things that would make a difference in our communities. If you have any other ideas or want to get involved in our work in the below areas, please contact the NCOSS Advocacy team on (02) 9211 2599 or advocacy@ncoss.org.au.

Mental health

What we heard

Mental health is a major concern across communities, with members telling us there is not enough investment to ensure people can access the supports and services they need close to home. Across NSW we heard barriers include the rising cost of healthcare, shortage of mental health workers, persistent societal and cultural stigma around mental health issues, and a lack of supports around transfer of care. We also heard that despite growing support for peer work, this cohort of the mental health workforce is under-supported and under-utilised in NSW.

Communities told us the lack of mental health workers and outreach services in regional and remote areas means people often cannot access treatment without the use of technology, which may not be appropriate for some people experiencing mental illness and/or possible without access to technology. Mental health workers flown in from metropolitan areas to service a community also have limited availability and knowledge of the unique needs of the local community.

There are also growing concerns about the number of people with mental illness who will miss out on crucial supports under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

What our members told us would make a difference

Our members told us that more support and funding is needed to expand peer work programs, 'wrap around' service models and community outreach mental health services. We also heard that supports, services and initiatives need to:



- Be specialised and grounded in community where there would be a better understanding of local, Aboriginal and CALD needs.
- Take into account intersecting needs where people with mental illness are also experiencing other issues such as homelessness and/or a drug or alcohol dependency.
- Work together within the community to develop a coordinated, collective impact approach to mental health.
- Be given access to longer term, more secure and flexible funding to allow development and resourcing of community-designed and driven initiatives.

Next steps

As a first step, our Pre-Budget Submission 2018/19 is calling for the NSW Government to expand the mental health peer workforce and support people at specific ‘pressure points’ in the mental healthcare system (such as in prevention, during transfer of care, and to avoid use of seclusion and restraint). NCOSS developed this recommendation in close consultation with key mental health groups and will continue to partner with these groups to support their work in this space.

We also need to mobilise our communities for this change to happen. NCOSS will be lobbying the NSW Government to adopt this recommendation and has also prepared an advocacy toolkit for members to use to lobby their local MP.

Regional spotlight: LikeMind

LikeMind is a pilot model of ‘wrap around’ services that provides a range of community and health services in one location for adults with mental health concerns, as well as their families and carers. These services include:

- Mental healthcare
- Drug and alcohol services
- Employment and training support
- Housing assistance
- Access to GPs, psychologists and social workers.

LikeMind currently operates in Penrith, Seven Hills and Orange and has helped over 2,200 people to date.

Alcohol and other drugs

What we heard

Dependence on alcohol and other drugs (AOD) can have far-reaching impacts on individuals, families, and communities. But we know punitive approaches are not working well and, in some cases, increased contact with the justice system exacerbates the negative impacts of AOD use. Communities told us that people experiencing poverty and disadvantage find it hard to access and maintain the treatment and support they need, and that the AOD system is not resourced to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

We heard concerns about a lack of funding leading to a major shortage of places in AOD treatment, and limited continuity of support for people transitioning back into the community following treatment.

Members also told us that people in AOD treatment often experience intersecting issues such as poor mental and/or oral health. These can have a significant flow on impact on general health, employment and social integration. However, AOD services are often not equipped or resourced to provide for these intersecting needs.



What our members told us would make a difference

Above all, members told us more secure funding and support is needed for:

- More detox beds and specialist detox centres, particularly in regional and remote communities.
- Residential drug and alcohol treatment facilities with long term case management as well as community-based services, that take into account intersecting needs such as mental health and provide a framework of stability.
- Increased capacity of the Drug Court program to accept more referrals from Local and District Courts.
- Incorporating more dental health and hygiene programs into AOD services.

Regional spotlight: Adele House

Adele is a 9 to 12 month residential alcohol & drug rehabilitation program for men aged over 18 years, who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. It focuses on personal needs, health and well-being, but also teaches clients important living skills and employment training through three key stages:

1. Core residential rehabilitation
2. Preparation for work and getting a job
3. Support to establish work routines, find accommodation and transition back into the community.

Adele currently has three residential facilities in Coffs Harbour, Bucca and in Werrington, Sydney.

Next steps

As part of our work in this space, NCOSS sits on the Advisory Group for the Managed Alcohol Program Trial being developed through the St Vincent's Hospital, which looks to trial a residential facility for men experiencing chronic alcohol dependency and homelessness in a 'housing first' approach with long term case management.

We will continue to have a conversation with our partners about improving access to drug and alcohol supports for vulnerable groups and are interested to hear about initiatives going on in our communities and further opportunities for NCOSS to get involved.

Childhood obesity

What we heard

We know that children from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds are at much greater risk of being overweight or obese. This has a significant impact on their wellbeing – both short and long-term. But our members told us that there are key barriers to low-income families trying to lead healthier lifestyles. These include poor urban design and lack of green spaces in local communities, the cost of sports memberships, lack and cost of healthy food options and low nutrition awareness.

Across the state we heard many of these barriers look similar across communities. But we also heard that different communities have unique needs, and they require solutions that are specific to those needs and



incorporate the resources of those communities.

What our members told us would make a difference

Across the state, we heard communities are working hard to develop their own initiatives that support at risk children and families to lead healthy lives. They told us more support is needed for:

- Better collaboration and partnership of services and community groups.
- Affordable and accessible sports clubs and activities, which not only encourage physical activity but help children socialise and feel part of the community.
- Initiatives that give children access to healthy food and teach them how to grow and prepare healthy food, such as breakfast clubs and school kitchen gardens. We heard that these initiatives should also engage the whole family.
- Better urban design, with local councils playing a larger role in making neighbourhoods more conducive to outdoor physical activity.

Regional spotlight: Let’s Play Let’s Eat

Family Services Illawarra started the new initiative “Let’s Play Let’s Eat” with the support of Schools as Community Centres (SACCS), Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District “Stir it Up!” and the University of Wollongong (UOW).

Together a group of Illawarra families participate in an 8 week program focused on interacting and playing with their children and healthy living through nutrition and cooking. The program is hosted at the UOW’s Early Start facility where “Let’s Play” happens in the Discovery Space and “Let’s Cook” happens in the Early Start industrial kitchen. The program has been a great way for families to live well, connect and build community.

Next steps

NCOSS takes active part in the NSW Obesity Expert Advisory Panel convened by the Ministry of Health. NCOSS is also a member of the NSW Healthy Planning Expert Working Group, which looks at opportunities to develop healthy built environments.

Our Pre-Budget Submission 2018/19 is also calling for the NSW Government to further invest in childhood obesity prevention with a focus on equitable access and opportunities in regional and remote NSW. This includes:

- Exploring whole-of-community approaches that support collaboration and partnership within communities to use existing resources and develop new initiatives that address their unique needs. NCOSS has also started conversations with the Western Sydney Diabetes Prevention Alliance and South Western Sydney Local Health District to explore how whole-of-community approaches in these areas can boost prevention of childhood obesity.
- Enabling vulnerable families on low incomes to access higher rebates for kids’ sport and fitness activities,
- Ensuring regional communities have equal access to fresh public drinking water.

We need to mobilise our communities for this change to happen. NCOSS will be lobbying the NSW Government to adopt these recommendations and prepared an advocacy kit for members to use to lobby their local MP. We are also interested to hear about other initiatives going on in our communities that are helping kids lead healthy, active lives.



Oral health

What we heard

We know that people on low incomes, Aboriginal communities and those in regional and remote areas all have worse oral health outcomes than the rest of NSW. Communities across the state consistently told us about the significant flow on impacts of poor oral health on people's lives – their physical, mental and social wellbeing, along with their employment opportunities.

We heard that access to affordable dental healthcare is a top priority, with many people on low incomes unable to afford private treatment and unaware that they may be entitled to government subsidies for dental treatment. On top of all this, we heard growing concerns about the lengthening wait times for public dental healthcare and lack of outreach programs for those in regional and remote areas.

What our members told us would make a difference

- More support and funding for outreach dental services in regional and remote areas.
- Better collection and analysis of data on vulnerable groups who are not accessing dental healthcare.
- Incorporation of dental health and hygiene education programs in other services, such as homelessness and AOD services.
- More support from Government to raise awareness of existing entitlements to subsidies for dental treatment.

Next steps

NCOSS participates in the NSW Oral Health Advisory Group, convened by the Ministry of Health. NCOSS also continues to advocate for increased funding for oral health services in NSW.

We will continue to look for opportunities to improve access to affordable dental healthcare for vulnerable groups. As part of this work, NCOSS will explore how to raise awareness and improve uptake of the national Child Dental Benefits Schedule. NCOSS will also advocate that this scheme continue, as it enables vulnerable families across Australia to access vital and affordable dental care.

We are also interested to hear about other initiatives going on in our communities or issues that need to be raised through the Oral Health Advisory Group.

Health transport

What we heard

Across all types of health services – but particularly for people with disabilities, chronic conditions and the elderly – our members told us that a lack of adequate transport, coupled with limited outreach services, is a major barrier to accessing timely and appropriate healthcare. Particularly in our regional and remote communities, services are not resourced to meet the growing level of need and people are missing out.

Members told us health services are rarely funded to provide transport options, despite this being a crucial



factor in people being able to access the service and treatment they need.

What our members told us would make a difference

In relation to improving accessible transport generally, there was support for:

- An easily accessible map of the NSW transport network showing current accessibility of train stations and bus interchanges.
- Increased community transport funding through the transition to the NDIS to help ensure existing linkages are maintained as sources of block funding cease.
- Driver education and training modules developed across a full range of transport modes (including embedded transport drivers) to increase the overall capacity to provide safe and appropriate services to all people with disability.

In relation to improving accessible transport in regional areas, there was support for:

- A fixed and public schedule for the full accessibility upgrade of all major regional transport infrastructure.
- Increased incentives to provide and operate wheelchair accessible taxis and other universal access point to point services in rural and regional areas, including higher subsidies for wheelchair accessible taxi drivers in these areas.
- Incentive for community transport operators to provide universally accessible point to point services in rural and regional NSW.
- Services working together to buy accessible buses.
- Fund community development style approaches to transport solutions.

Next steps

NCOSS continues to advocate for regional transport solutions in the Far West and Western NSW, and for improving access to the Isolated Patient Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS), including extending it to include payments to Community Transport Providers. The NCOSS Transport Policy Advisory Group will look for opportunities to progress these issues and invites interested members to get in touch by contacting the Advocacy team on (02) 9211 2599 or advocacy@ncoss.org.au



Disability

Introduction

We all want to be included, and to participate fully in society. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) gives people choice and control over their disability supports, but only covers 10% of people with disability in NSW. In regional consultations, communities told us the NSW mainstream service system needs to be responsive to people with disability, whether or not they are eligible for the NDIS. We heard about the gaps in services and supports for people with disability that will be created with the closure of the Department of Ageing and Disability and Homecare (ADHC) in June 2018.

We also heard that an inclusive society is critical and there is a real need to improve accessible transport and housing, while creating opportunities for people with disability to participate in their local communities.

What can you do?

Across NSW we heard about the types of things that would make a difference in our communities. If you have any other ideas or want to get involved in our work in the below areas, please contact the NCOSS Advocacy team on (02) 9211 2599 or advocacy@ncoss.org.au.

Need for independent disability representative advocacy and information organisations after June 2018

What we heard

Across NSW, we've heard strongly that people with disability need information and active assistance outside the NDIS to help them take control of their lives. Our members emphasised that they provide everyday assistance to people with disability with issues such as getting a job, being included in school and TAFE, securing a tenancy and understanding their bills. There is deep concern about the unmet need created when independent advocacy and information organisations lose their ADHC funding.

Our members also emphasised the crucial role played by advocates navigating the system and reducing barriers to inclusion, so that people with disability can access services on the same basis as other citizens in NSW.

We heard that the NDIS will not reduce the need for independent representation, advocacy and information. In fact, these organisations are a critical component of ensuring all people with disability experience the choice and control which underpins the NDIS.

What our members told us would make a difference

Our members emphasised it was critically important that the NSW Government maintain the funding which currently supports representative advocacy and information organisations. Further, this funding should be combined with growth funding that acknowledges the enhanced need for advocacy in the NDIS environment and the current unmet demand.



Next steps

As part of our Pre-Budget Submission 2018/19, NCOSS is advocating that the NSW Government invest \$13 million to maintain funding to organisations providing representation with independent advocacy information to people with disability and their families so that these crucial supports can continue after 30 June 2018. In lobbying for this change, we will be supporting the work of our members in the Advocacy Alliance.

We also need to mobilise our communities for this change to happen. We have prepared an advocacy kit for members to use to lobby their local MP.

Further gaps left by the closure of the ADHC

What we heard

Our members were concerned that people with disability would be at risk when the non-disability services currently provided by ADHC ceased after 30 June 2018. Examples of these services include:

- Nurses in each Local Health District specialising in the needs of people with intellectual disability.
- Court support programs providing volunteers to assist people with intellectual disability at police stations and in court.
- Programs providing intensive support to families including children with disability under significant stress and at risk of seeking alternate accommodation for their child.

What our members told us would make a difference

A whole of Government approach must be taken to disability, in line with the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014*. This involves each Department assuming funding responsibility for the programs and services provided by ADHC which fall within its remit. This would also ensure Disability Inclusion Action Plans of each Government agency encompassed broader definitions of inclusion.

Specifically, our members told us the following actions would make a difference:

- Funding for agencies to implement actions in their Disability Inclusion Action Plans.
- Establishment of specialist intellectual disability health teams in each Local Health District, expanding on a model which is currently being piloted.
- Maintenance of funding for intensive family supports for families living with disability.

Spotlight: Intellectual Disability Health Teams

Three pilot teams of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals with expertise in the health issues faced by people with intellectual disability, work collaboratively to provide a patient-centred approach to health care. This specialised approach improves health outcomes for people with intellectual disability.

These pilot teams are funded by the NSW Ministry of Health and currently operate in Kogarah, Fairfield and Cremorne.

Next steps

As part of our work in this space, NCOSS attends Executive Briefings related to the NDIS implementation in NSW,



where we monitor issues emerging through the transition.

NCOSS will also be bringing our members and stakeholders together for a series of roundtables to discuss our members' experiences of the interaction between the NDIS and mainstream systems. The roundtables will enable us to provide collective advice to Government on current gaps and emerging issues in the transition to the NDIS. The roundtables will aim to ensure the NSW mainstream service system is equipped to be fully inclusive of people with disability in an NDIS environment.

People falling through the cracks in the transition to the NDIS

What we heard

Our members are concerned about people they support who will 'fall through the cracks' when the NDIS rolls out. Particular concerns were raised around people:

- Receiving a Community Care Support Program Package who are ineligible for the NDIS.
- 'On the fringe' who may not be connected to networks to inform them about the NDIS.
- With psychosocial disability who have lost support from the Commonwealth Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) and Partners in Recovery Programs.
- Whose health conditions would not be supported by the NDIS.

Members were particularly concerned about messaging around the Continuity of Support Program. There is a public perception that the program guarantees people who are ineligible for the NDIS the same level of support they previously had; in reality, it provides these people with short-term support (through their service provider) to access mainstream services. The difference between expectations and reality has created widespread disappointment.

What our members told us would make a difference

There was strong support for:

- Government developing a process to track those who fall through the cracks if deemed ineligible for, or not connected with the NDIS to identify the impact of their ineligibility and strategies to ensure they remain supported in the community.
- Clearer messaging around the Continuity of Support Program to manage people's expectations of the support they will receive.

Next steps

NCOSS will look for advocacy opportunities to progress these issues, including in the Executive Briefings mentioned above. We are joining a coalition of our members in the Community Care Forum to advocate that the NSW Government continues to support people on the Community Care Support Program. More broadly, we will argue that people deemed ineligible for the NDIS receive the support they need.



A quality workforce to meet the needs of the NDIS

What we heard

We know that the roll-out of the NDIS is substantially increasing demand for disability support workers, and this trend will continue. Communities told us it will be difficult to attract quality workers to meet this demand. Indeed, they feel that the quality of qualifications in the disability area has decreased, so that they cannot be confident that students graduating with particular qualifications (for example a Diploma) would have the requisite base level of knowledge and skills to effectively work in the industry.

On the other hand, regional TAFE colleges are finding it difficult to fill their disability courses. There are concerns that support work is not an attractive career option because of the low pay, lack of career progression and casualisation of the workforce. There is a particular need to attract, develop and retain culturally appropriate staff to assist Aboriginal people with disability.

Our members tell us that their services face pressure to train and develop their staff, but are unaware of the training opportunities available.

What our members told us would make a difference

- Greater investment in training and development of support workers, including the development of a workforce strategy to meet demand.
- A skills audit of qualifications to ensure comparable quality. Ensure courses focus on the provision of person-centred support, in line with the principles of the NDIS.
- Subsidise courses to encourage further enrolment.
- TAFEs advertising their courses to both individuals and employers.

Next steps

It is important that the Government provides incentives to grow the disability support workforce to meet demand, while ensuring that people with disability retain the ultimate say over who supports them. We will be starting consultations about ways to strike the balance between workforce quality and consumer choice and control.

Limited access to transport

What we heard

We've heard that lack of accessible transport is a major issue, particularly in rural and regional areas. Schedules for accessibility upgrades to train stations are not known, there are very few wheelchair accessible taxis available, and there is no requirement for embedded transport services (such as those provided by local clubs and sporting teams) to be accessible.

We know that community transport is already stretched, and many operators will struggle to survive once most of their funding is transferred to the NDIS. Options provided in regional areas are often inflexible. A small errand could often take the whole day because of the limited services available.



What our members told us would make a difference

In relation to improving accessible transport generally, there was support for:

- An easily accessible map of the NSW transport network showing current accessibility of train stations and bus interchanges.
- Increased community transport funding through the transition to the NDIS to help ensure existing linkages are maintained as sources of block funding cease.
- Driver education and training modules developed across a full range of transport modes (including embedded transport drivers) to increase the overall capacity to provide safe and appropriate services to all people with disability.

In relation to improving accessible transport in regional areas, there was support for:

- A fixed and public schedule for the full accessibility upgrade of all major regional transport infrastructure.
- Increased incentives to provide and operate wheelchair accessible taxis and other universal access point to point services in rural and regional areas, including higher subsidies for wheelchair accessible taxi drivers in these areas.
- Incentive for community transport operators to provide universally accessible point to point services in rural and regional NSW.
- Services working together to buy accessible buses.
- Fund community development style approaches to transport solutions.

Next steps

NCOSS convenes the Transport Policy Advisory Group, which advocates around these issues and works to ensure that transport policy at all levels fosters inclusions of people with disability. Improving transport accessibility of transport, the affordability of transport for people with disability, ensuring the sustainability of community transport, and improving the availability of transport in rural and regional areas are particular focuses of this group. If you would like to be involved, please contact the NCOSS Advocacy team on (02) 9211 2599 or advocacy@ncoss.org.au.

NCOSS also sits on the Accessible Transport Advisory Committee convened by Transport for NSW, which advises on access implications of developments in the transport system.

Need for more accessible housing

What we heard

In many of our consultations there was a strong focus on the lack of housing appropriate to the needs of people with disability. We need an increase in accessible housing stock if we are to realise the goal of providing people with disability with choice and control over their lives. In Sydney, there was particular concern that mobility needs are not being properly taken into consideration in the move towards higher density living.

For people who require home modifications, key issues include resistance by landlords in the private rental market, and the lack of eligibility for funding for people who live in housing owned by community housing providers.



What our members told us would make a difference

- A NSW Affordable Disability Housing Strategy building on the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) with a focus on accessibility. The Fund could enable proof of concept trials to encourage innovation. Some money should be put aside for investment in regional areas.
- All new social housing should be fully accessible.
- Encourage rent to buy schemes to allow people on lower incomes to enter the housing market.
- Expand shared equity schemes, which are helpful in increasing access to home ownership.
- Accessibility should be required in affordable rental properties.

Next steps

NCOSS will continue to advocate for an integrated housing policy, incorporating higher standards of universal accessibility across all new housing in NSW. Through our involvement in the Greater Sydney Commission planning processes, and submissions to review of planning regulations guidelines, we have argued that:

- The minimum universal standard of accessibility should be the Liveable Housing Australia silver standard of accessible design.
- New developments should include targets for the incorporation of accessibility higher standards.

These issues will be a key priority for the Forum of Non-Government Agencies (FONGA), a cross-sectoral group convened by NCOSS. FONGA has formed a working group on housing, with a focus on accessibility. If your organisation is a member of FONGA and you would like to be involved in the working group, please contact the NCOSS Advocacy team on (02) 9211 2599 or advocacy@ncoss.org.au.

Focus on inclusion and community participation

What we heard

We know that an inclusive society is one where people with disability can fully participate in the community. It is important for Government to actively encourage this participation by funding programs which take a holistic community level approach.

Members highlighted that while Disability Inclusion Action Plans existed at State Government and Local Government level, the actions were often 'internally' focused on process, rather than focusing on building an inclusive community.

We heard that programs with a holistic and flexible approach, such as Ability Links have been very successful in NCOSS Investing in Communities Conferences 2017 facilitating local community development, and that Aboriginal Ability Linkers have been particularly successful in their communities. Members expressed disappointment that the Ability Links program would end in June 2018, suggesting there was merit in extending this approach to other areas.



We also heard about whole-of-community approaches to creating inclusion, such as Macarthur Access Group for Inclusive Communities (MAGIC) project in the Wollondilly area, which encourages partnerships between business and community in terms of creating welcoming spaces for people with disability.

What our members told us would make a difference

- More community support initiatives welcoming participation by all.
- Extend the Ability Links program, broadening the approach to other areas so that Linkers work with a range of vulnerable people (for example those in need of early intervention or at risk of recidivism).
- Encouragement of partnerships between business and community to support inclusion.
- Actions in Disability Inclusion Action Plans taking a broad approach and focussing on community inclusion.

Next steps

NCOSS participates in the Disability Inclusion Plan Implementation Committee, where we hear experiences of Government Departments in implementing the Disability Inclusion Action Plans. In this space, we will monitor the DIAPs to ensure the actions within them address the main issues faced by people with disability, making measurable progress. We will also look for other opportunities to advocate for a community development approach to inclusion.

Regional spotlight: MAGIC Project

The Macarthur Access Group for Inclusive Communities (MAGIC) project commenced in 2014 in response to consultations with people with disability and their families who identified challenges accessing services, businesses and the broader community. It represents a collaboration between three local governments in South West Sydney area, AbilityLinks, Western Sydney University and people with disability.

The project aimed to provide incentives for local businesses to become more accessible and inclusive of people with disability through training and endorsement. Over 120 businesses in the Macarthur region have been endorsed by the MAGIC project. The project steering committee is looking for opportunities to expand into other local government areas.



Children, Young People and Families

Introduction

All children deserve the best start in life, however too many of our children and young people are growing up in poverty. We know that children who experience poverty and disadvantage are more likely to have health and behavioural problems, experience housing and food insecurity and not achieve their full potential at school. Long term this experience shapes their employment prospects, health outcomes and sense of wellbeing.

Across the state, communities told us that whole-of-family, whole-of-community approaches, that provide targeted support for vulnerable children and families early on, are the most effective and efficient approach to delivering best outcomes.

What can you do?

Across NSW we heard about the types of things that would make a difference in our communities. If you have any other ideas or want to get involved in our work in the below areas, please contact the NCOSS Advocacy team on (02) 9211 2599 or advocacy@ncoss.org.au.

Health | Pre-and-Post Natal Care

What we heard

The period leading up to and immediately following pregnancy is when targeted support that can have lasting impacts is needed for vulnerable families. However, it is often the least accessible.

Barriers such as limited service provision, previous negative experiences with the service system, affordability, and logistical barriers (such as access to transport) means too many families are falling through the cracks. For example, in regions such as Orange, we heard the hospital is out of town and it is hard for many families to access via public transport.

It is important that vulnerable families are assisted and linked into the service system early on in life, to ensure seamless support throughout a child's life.

Regional spotlight: The Nepean Cranbrook Neighbourhood Centre

The Nepean Cranbrook Neighbourhood Centre acts as a hub for the community and provides much needed wrap around services for vulnerable children, and their families.

Onsite they offer a range of programs, such as supported playgroups that are culturally appropriate, parenting programs, a speech pathologist, breakfast programs and furthermore facilitate access for vulnerable families by organising a bus that picks up children from their homes.

What our members told us would make a difference

Across the state, we heard of the need for soft-entry points for vulnerable children and families. Our members told us that:



- Nurse-led home visiting programs can improve a child's health and developmental outcomes and help cultivate a safe and nurturing home environment. In NSW, the Ministry of Health funds the nurse-led home visiting program, Sustaining NSW Families, in eight sites across the state. While nurse-led home visiting programs are currently available in some areas of disadvantage in NSW, many areas are missing out.
- Greater support for Aboriginal Families is needed. Programs such as the Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy is a great initiative that should be enhance, expanded and supported.
- Playgroups are a great first soft entry point for families. Across the state, we heard that secured funding is needed to facilitate supported playgroups; and provide culturally appropriate playgroups that include grandparents and community elders.

Next steps

For the past three years NCOSS has been advocating for the investment of an additional \$25 million per year in the state-wide roll out of nurse-led home visiting programs for vulnerable families.

In the 2017/2018 Budget we were encouraged to see the NSW Government recognise the value of these programs as part of the Future Directions Strategy for social housing. This saw \$1.5 million in 2017-18 committed to expanding the Sustaining NSW Families Program, with an additional site in Wollongong and enhancement to the sites in the Fairfield, Rockdale and Wyong Local Government Areas. Despite this, with only nine sites across the state, many vulnerable families will continue to lack access to this vital service.

We will continue to advocate for a state-wide roll out. In the short to medium term, NCOSS will be providing a submission to the NSW Parliament *inquiry into support for new parents and babies in NSW*. To provide input into the submission and to be involved in the development process, please contact the NCOSS Advocacy team on (02) 9211 2599 or advocacy@ncoss.org.au.

Health | Childhood Obesity

What we heard

We know that children from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds are at greater risk of being overweight or obese. This has a significant impact on their wellbeing – both short and long-term. But our members told us that there are key barriers to low-income families trying to lead healthier lifestyles. These include poor urban design and lack of green spaces in local communities, the cost of sports memberships, lack and cost of healthy food options and low nutrition awareness.

Across the state we heard many of these barriers look similar across communities. But we also heard that different communities have unique needs, and they require solutions that are specific to those needs and incorporate the resources of those communities.

What our members told us would make a difference

Across the state, we heard communities are working hard to develop their own initiatives that support at risk



children and families to lead healthy lives. They told us more support is needed for:

- Better collaboration and partnership of services and community groups.
- Affordable and accessible sports clubs and activities, which not only encourage physical activity but help children socialise and feel part of the community.
- Initiatives that give children access to healthy food and teach them how to grow and prepare healthy food, such as breakfast clubs and school kitchen gardens. We heard that these initiatives should also engage the whole family.
- Better urban design, with local councils playing a larger role in making neighbourhoods more conducive to outdoor physical activity.

Regional spotlight: Let's Play Let's Eat

Family Services Illawarra started "Let's Play Let's Eat". Together a group of Illawarra families participate in an 8 week program focused on interacting and playing with their children and healthy living through nutrition and cooking.

The program is hosted at the UOW's Early Start facility where "Let's Play" happens in the Discovery Space and "Let's Cook" happens in the Early Start industrial kitchen. The program has been a great way for families to live well, connect and build community.

Next steps

NCOSS takes active part in the NSW Obesity Expert Advisory Panel convened by the Ministry of Health. NCOSS is also a member of the NSW Healthy Planning Expert Working Group, which looks at opportunities to develop healthy built environments.

Our Pre-Budget Submission 2018/19 is also calling for the NSW Government to further invest in childhood obesity prevention with a focus on equitable access and opportunities in regional and remote NSW. This includes:

- Exploring whole-of-community approaches that support collaboration and partnership within communities to use existing resources and develop new initiatives that address their unique needs. NCOSS has also started conversations with the Western Sydney Diabetes Prevention Alliance and South Western Sydney Local Health District to explore how whole-of-community approaches in these areas can boost prevention of childhood obesity.
- Enabling vulnerable families on low incomes to access higher rebates for kids' sport and fitness activities.
- Ensuring regional communities have equal access to fresh public drinking water.

We need to mobilise our communities for this change to happen. NCOSS will be lobbying the NSW Government to adopt these recommendations and has also prepared an advocacy kit for members to use to lobby their local MP. We are also interested to hear about other initiatives going on in our communities that are helping kids lead healthy, active lives.

Education | Early Childhood Education and Care

What we heard

We know that high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) is vital to breaking the cycle of poverty



and enhancing a child's developmental outcomes. Yet NSW continues to spend less on ECEC services than most other states and territories. This means less access, higher fees, and less opportunity for vulnerable children. In regional and remote areas, and for Aboriginal communities, this problem is even worse.

Across the state we heard concerns around:

- The need for increased training, support supervision and access to mentoring and development opportunities and pathways for the ECEC workforce.
- Transport and access to transport in regional and remote communities.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access and representation in providing culturally appropriate ECEC provision.

What our members told us would make a difference

Our members told us that more government support and funding is needed to support vulnerable families' access to benefits of ECEC. This funding should work to:

- Develop cross-sectoral partnerships – between early childhood services, children and family services, Aboriginal services, employment services, educational institutions, housing providers, government, the private sector and employees.
- Ensure early childhood services are equipped to support children who experience domestic violence.
- Ensure children in vulnerable families successfully transition to preschool and that their enrolment begins at birth.
- Support strategies to improve Aboriginal access to early education, including growing the number of Aboriginal community-controlled services, resourcing an Aboriginal representative body, and developing a systematic and sustained approach to improving the cultural accessibility of mainstream services.

Next steps

Our Pre-Budget Submission is calling on the NSW Government to invest in a \$250 million early childhood and education fund to complement existing funding measures and ensure vulnerable children can access the full benefits of quality early education. We need to mobilise our communities for this change to happen. NCOSS will be lobbying the NSW Government to adopt this recommendation and has also prepared an advocacy toolkit for members to use to lobby their local MP.

As part of our work in this space, NSW also convenes the NSW Children Services Forum (the Forum). The Forum works towards improving the quality, range and provision of children's services in NSW through coordinated advocacy. Membership is made up of state-wide, not-for-profit children's service organisations and their representatives, and the Forum has a particular interest in ensuring that children from low income, and vulnerable families have access to quality early education.

Housing | Youth Homelessness

What we heard

Children and young people need stable and secure homes to thrive. However, across the state we heard



concern about the increased number of young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Homelessness greatly affects health and education outcomes, with children and young people who experience homelessness more likely to find themselves homeless as adults. Young people who encounter the child protection or criminal justice system face additional barriers to finding stable and affordable accommodation, and are often the least supported.

What our members told us would make a difference

- Increased targeted housing options for young people that link accommodation to training, employment and other support services. Services such as the Foyer Model, and Lighthouse (a Melbourne based model) were identified as possible models to be rolled out in NSW.
- Need for better and earlier exit planning for children and young people in the OOHC system to transition into safe and secure housing.
- Developing innovative tenancy and housing models that are suitable for children and young people, with a focus on reconnecting with family where the family environment is safe and constructive.

Regional spotlight: Youth Foyers

“Youth foyers” give young people access to affordable accommodation linking to training, employment and other support services. Work is underway to develop youth foyers in a number of regions including **Western Sydney**, the **Hunter** and **Wagga Wagga**.

The Government has also recently announced the development of **Foyer51**, focusing on young people in the first 18 months of leaving out-of-home care.

Next steps

This year, NCOSS is calling for the NSW Government to invest

\$45 million over four years towards developing at least five foyer models across NSW. Foyer models have been shown to help at risk young people successfully transition to independence, and will play a particular important role in supporting young people leaving out of home care.

As part of our work in this space, NCOSS further convenes the NSW Children, Young People and Families Alliance, a network of service providers, representative and peak organisations advocating for the well-being of children, young people and families. Youth Homelessness is a key advocacy agenda for this group.

NCOSS is also working with the COSS network to champion the National 1 in 7 Campaign, where housing and homelessness will be a key priority area.

Connection to Community | Child Protection System

What we heard

All children and young people should feel safe and connected to their families, communities and country. Across the state we heard of the steady increase in both the numbers, and rate of children entering out of home care, and how children are not getting the support they need when they need it, before a crisis occurs. We know that this picture is worse for Aboriginal families and communities.

Work is currently underway to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility of existing services through



the NSW Targeted Early Intervention (TEI) Reform and Out of Home Care Reform Process.

Our members continue to be concerned that there has been no new or increased funding as part of this process. The under-resourcing of programs focused on families and communities is increasing pressure on more intensive and costly interventions and undermining the child protection system. Moreover, the funding that is provided is increasingly at the pointy end, and there is not enough directed towards TEI services.

We further heard how children transitioning from the OOHC system into independent adulthood (15-18 year age group) are a particularly vulnerable cohort at risk of homelessness and significant harm, and are essential to responding to the intergenerational cycle of children entering care.

What our members told us would make a difference

Our members told us that more funding is needed for early intervention services across the state. We also heard that more support is needed to ensure:

- Aboriginal community controlled organisations can meet the needs of Aboriginal children and young people in their communities.
- Better urban design and the successful co-location of services to ensure ease of access for vulnerable families, and better collaboration and partnership of services and community groups.
- Young voices are embedded in service design.
- Kinship programs are acknowledged as a viable option of care.
- Initiatives to address child removal (particularly in Aboriginal families) adopt a co-design, community led approach.

Next steps

NCOSS is working collaboratively with FAMS, and the other peaks to ensure that the TEI and OOHC Reform processes lead to best outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

As part of our work in this space NCOSS convenes the Children, Young People and Families Alliance, with the reforms being a key interest and advocacy agenda for this group.

NCOSS is also signatory and strong supporter of the Family Matters Campaign and a member of the NSW Family Matters Group. The campaign aims to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2040.

Regional spotlight: Aboriginal Family Planning Circle (AFPC)

AFPC is a community-based program that has been running in Blacktown LGA since 2006.

The program works with Aboriginal women and their families who are at risk of having their children assumed into out-of-home care.

AFPC is a program grounded in community, working with families, service providers (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, government and not for profit) and community elders to provide holistic support to address clients' complex needs, and improve the circumstances into which children are born.



Cost of Living

What we heard

Across the state, our members told us that lack of adequate and affordable transport, increasing cost of household bills, and the rising cost of recreational activities for children is an increasing concern and barrier in providing children with the best start in life. For children and families that face complex needs and geographical isolation, this experience is compounded.

Moreover, limited availability and access to education and employment opportunities in regional and remote communities compounds this issue, and often results in many young people being forced to look for education and employment opportunities further afield. This results in far reaching impacts and many children and young people feeling disconnected from their communities, families and country.

What our members told us would make a difference

- Integrated service delivery and design, where services work together to coordinate and provide accessible service provision, such as bus sharing.
- Incentives for community transport operators to provide universally accessible point to point services in rural and regional NSW.
- Affordable and accessible sports clubs and activities.
- Better urban design and support for youth friendly public spaces such as playgrounds and youth hubs.
- Initiatives in communities and schools that empower youth through arts and creativity.

Regional spotlight: OneVision

OneVision is a not-for-profit organisation introducing arts based multiliteracy programs to isolated and marginalised communities.

Working with community groups, schools and youth agencies OneVision runs workshops that combine hip hop and film production to help young people learn new skills, enhance self-expression and confidence.

Next steps

As part of our work in this space, NSW convenes the NSW Children, Young People and Families Alliance. Cost of Living is a key advocacy agenda for this group.

As part of the National 1 in 7 Campaign NCOSS is launching, we are committed to carrying out a Cost of Living report for Children and Families in 2018. Watch this space!

Safety | Children as Victims of Domestic Violence

What we heard

All children should be safe and empowered. Yet too often children are the unseen or unheard victims of domestic and family violence (DFV), and this experience can impact on their health, wellbeing, education, relationships and housing outcomes both now and later in life. Moreover, these children are more likely to enter the out-of-home care system; and come into contact with the juvenile justice system.

Children and young people have distinct experiences of DFV. However, in NSW there has been no coherent



public policy approach to children affected by DFV, which has resulted in uncoordinated and poorly directed responses to children. Our communities have highlighted the lack of service provision that is child-centred and trauma informed, where most programs and services for children are not distinct from programs and services for women.

What our members told us would make a difference

We heard that we need responses that support all children, everywhere. This requires a multi-pronged approach that:

- Raises awareness of the impact on children and young people, making it easier for children to disclose instances of domestic violence.
- Ensures children and young people, including diverse groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, and children and young people with disability are involved in the design and delivery of services that affect them.
- Funds child-centred, specialist services that support children and young people who are or have experienced domestic and family violence.
- Develops and tests perpetrator programs that focus on children and fathers.
- Ensures services and programs are age specific, so no children fall through the gap.

Next steps

This year, NCOSS is calling on the NSW Government to invest in the delivery of child-centred, trauma informed services targeting children and young people, and commit to the delivery of, at a minimum, a service in metropolitan Sydney, one in regional NSW, and an Aboriginal community-controlled service. This investment will enhance the evidence base of models of service delivery that are child-centred and trauma informed.

NCOSS is a proud supporter of the Advocate for Children and Young People and their campaign 'End Violence against Children'.

NCOSS is also working with the COSS network to champion the National 1 in 7 Campaign, where children as victims of domestic violence will be a key priority area.

Regional spotlight: Kids Can Women Can

Kids Can is an eight-week group work program for children aged 8-12 years who have experienced domestic and family violence.

Children engage in a range of therapeutic activities, which address the impacts of violence and build children's self-esteem confidence and resilience.

The course also educates children on appropriate protective behaviours and safety strategies.

Mothers are also encouraged to attend the *Women*

Can support group. The program has been positively evaluated.



Women

Introduction

In NSW, the picture of poverty is highly feminised, with women at greater risk of poverty and disadvantage than men throughout their lifecycle. Across the state, we heard how women have less financial security and remain underrepresented in the workforce – particularly in secure, senior and well paid work. These inequalities accumulate and compound for women later in life, resulting in lower savings and superannuation. Leaving women with fewer resources to cope in times of crisis, we are now seeing increasing numbers of women who are homeless or at risk of housing stress.

This picture is worst for women who experience multiple and interconnecting forms of disadvantage – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) women; women with disability; LGBTIQ communities and women living in rural and remote areas.

What can you do?

Across NSW we heard about the types of things that would make a difference in our communities. If you have any other ideas or want to get involved in our work, please contact the NCOSS Advocacy team on (02) 9211 2599 or advocacy@ncoss.org.au.

Financial Literacy

What we heard

Improving the financial literacy for women across their lifecycle is a major concern for our communities. In NSW, women are more likely than men to have low levels of financial literacy, more likely to be financially insecure, and moreover have specific financial literacy needs that aren't catered for.

This financial insecurity places women at greater risk of crisis and is a critical factor in their ability to escape an abusive relationship. Across the state, we heard about financial abuse where a partner may control household finances, keep family assets in their name, run up debts or stop their partner from working.

We know that financial literacy plays a vital role in breaking this systemic cycle of disadvantage. It enables greater economic participation and security, improved quality of life and wellbeing, and reduced social isolation.

Regional spotlight: YMCA Money Savvy Program

MoneySavvy is an interactive one day financial education workshop for year 10 and 11 students and is sponsored by HSBC Australia.

The program is designed to teach students about money management and to equip them with the skills and tools to help make informed decisions about their spending choices.

This is a type of program that could provide a gendered lens to demonstrate gender equity and improve financial literacy for young women.



What our members told us would make a difference

Communities showed overwhelming support for increasing women's access to Financial Counsellors, and the positive impact they have for vulnerable women in our communities. We also heard support for:

- School and community based financial literacy programs that have a gendered lens, ensuring young women are taught about superannuation, financial abuse, future planning and the importance of investing early in superannuation and retirement income.
- The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC)'s Money Smart School Program as a core resource, which should develop a focus on the financial literacy needs of women and girls.
- Expanding No Interest Loan Scheme models of delivery.
- Financial literacy programs that are grounded in community, and are targeted and tailored for local, Aboriginal and CALD needs.

Next steps

Improving financial literacy for women across their lifecycle is a key advocacy agenda for NCOSS. Through our New Year for Women Campaign we have been working with the Federal Office for Women, ASIC and Women NSW to ensure these solutions and actions are part of their agendas. Moreover, these solutions will be set out in the NCOSS Women Action Plan currently being developed. This Action Plan will inform the implementation of the NSW Women's Strategy.

As a first step, in our Pre-Budget Submission 2018/19 NCOSS is advocating for an additional \$7.8 million over three years to expand and enhance the delivery of the Financial Counselling Services Program across NSW, and explore avenues to develop gender specific material to better assist vulnerable women.

We need to mobilise our communities for this change to happen. NCOSS will be lobbying the NSW Government to adopt this recommendation and has also prepared an advocacy kit for members to use to lobby their local MP.

As part of our work in this space, NCOSS is also a member of the NSW Financial Inclusion Network. Created in 2015, this network aims to engage the community sector, government and other organisations, to work together towards a more financially inclusive future for NSW.

Employment

What we heard

In NSW, we know that women do not experience the same employment opportunities than men. The current nature of our workforce means women are concentrated in sectors and occupations that pay less and are often less secure. They have limited access to leadership positions, and face systemic disadvantage in career progression. On top of this, their careers are more likely to be interrupted due to caring responsibilities. This compounds across their life, resulting in lower superannuation levels and retirement savings.

Moreover, we heard of minimal support for women who are seeking to re-train and re-enter the workforce, and of compounding barriers for women facing drug and alcohol addictions, domestic violence, and complex needs.



In our rural and remote communities lack of employment options, service support, transport and distance further impede women's access to jobs.

What our members told us would make a difference

Our members told us that we need a consortium of solutions targeting education, government and business reforms to ensure women have equal access to employment opportunities. Above all we heard the need for: Career programs and strategies in schools that are responsive to the needs of girls and women.

- Improved access to affordable and adequate childcare, particularly for vulnerable women and families.
- Strategies to change workplace culture. For example, making flexible work available and accepted, targets to increase women in middle and senior leadership positions, and increase co-sharing job opportunities.
- Increased funding for return to work programs and programs for women who have experienced domestic violence, such as TAFE's Work Opportunities for Women.
- Changes to parental leave, specifically working to ensure that superannuation is provided during parental leave, and that more men take parental leave.

Regional spotlight: SHIFT Project

Founded in Byron Bay, The SHIFT Project Byron is a short-term educational transition program for women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The program aims to support women to re-establish life skills, confidence and independence as they transition to a stable integrated life within the community.

A key aspect to the program is participants contributing to a variety of local initiatives and businesses which broaden their practical skills, and opportunities for employment.

Next steps

These solutions and more will be a key part of the recommendations set out in the NCOSS Women Action Plan currently being developed. As an immediate action, our Pre-Budget Submission has also called for the NSW Government to invest in a \$250 million early childhood and education fund. This fund will complement existing funding measures and ensure more vulnerable families and women have access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services.

We need to mobilise our communities for this change to happen. NCOSS will be lobbying the NSW Government to adopt this recommendation and has also prepared an advocacy toolkit for members to use to lobby their local MP.

Housing

What we heard

In NSW, single older women are one of the fastest growing groups of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and housing stress. Across the state we heard of far too many women reaching retirement age



with far fewer financial resources than men, and more women living in precarious housing situations.

For many women, this reality is a result of accumulative poverty experienced over the course of their life. For other women, housing stress and homelessness is a result of experiencing domestic and family violence.

What our members told us would make a difference

Across the state, we heard of several key strategies that would better aid older women:

- That NSW develop a strategy to address the homelessness of older women and develop strategies to account for their housing needs. This should include clear targets in older women's access to social and affordable housing, and inclusive measures for older women in all relevant housing strategies.
- Consultation and co-design with older women on their experience and needs when developing mainstream homeless and housing strategies.
- Work to make the private rental sector a viable long term option for older women.
- Invest in housing models appropriate to the needs of older women at risk of homelessness. These projects should be co-designed with older women with scope to house women with a range of income levels, deliver owned as well as rented units and provide options for women to 'buy-in' through equity contributions.
- Improve and review the way the housing and homeless service system responds to and supports homeless older women.

Regional spotlight: Women's Property Initiatives (WPI)

WPI is a women specific community housing organisation, providing secure, long-term, affordable homes for vulnerable women in Victoria.

In 2015 WPI commissioned a research report on shared equity housing for older single women. A shared equity model enables women with modest assets to use them to enter into joint home ownership with a community housing provider like WPI.

While shared equity models have been successfully implemented internationally, there are no schemes in Australia aimed at older women. WPI has designed its own shared equity model tailored to this group and the market conditions in Victoria.

Next steps

NCOSS played a key role in establishing the NSW Government's Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF), and our advocacy continues to shape the roll-out of this fund. In particular, Phase 2 will also prioritise older women.

Additionally, our *Pre-Budget Submission 2018/19* is calling for a \$22 million investment to fund the delivery of affordable housing projects for older women in at least three locations across NSW.

The above solutions to address older women and homelessness will be a key part of the recommendations set out in the NCOSS Women Action Plan currently being developed.



Superannuation

What we heard

Superannuation is what many Australians plan to rely on during retirement. On average women are currently retiring with 46.6% less superannuation than men in Australia. Coupled with lower rate of accumulated assets over their lives, this provides a barrier to women being financially secure particularly later in life.

This situation is even worse for women who experience added layers of inequality due to race, disability, age, sexuality, or socio-economic status. For example, only 60% of Aboriginal women have superannuation coverage.

What our members told us would make a difference:

- Legislate for superannuation contributions to be included in Paid Parental Leave schemes.
- Removal of \$450 a month earning threshold. This threshold prevents many women who work fewer hours, or are employed casually by multiple employers, from reaching this threshold.
- Develop a family style superannuation where superannuation is earned and shared collectively across family heads, rather than individually.
- Address the lack of knowledge around superannuation entitlements at the time of relationship breakdowns and require financial advice be given to both parties in divorce proceedings.
- Explore options to recognise and value caring responsibilities through superannuation contributions for carers based on models such as caring credits systems that have been effective in other jurisdictions.
- Train managers to provide superannuation information to new employees with a gendered lens, and in community languages.
- Require superannuation be accrued on Centrelink benefits.

Next steps

These solutions to address the superannuation system will be a key part of the recommendations set out in the NCOSS Women Action Plan currently being developed. This Action Plan will inform the implementation of the NSW Women's Strategy.

Domestic Violence

What we heard

Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) is a major concern across our communities, with our members telling us that funding for DFV services is insecure and often done year to year with no consistency in service or project provision.

Moreover, as a result there is a void for dedicated services for women in domestic violence situations, with complex mental health, drug, and alcohol issues. For regional areas this reality is worse, with limited access to transport and safe and secure accommodation.



Communities further told us that too often children are the unseen victims of domestic and family violence, with a shortage of services and programs that are child-centred, and address the significant, long lasting impact and trauma experienced by children.

There is also growing concerns about the high rates of reoffending, and the lack of support and programs provided to perpetrators of domestic violence. For regions in Western NSW, there are no accredited perpetrator programs past Penrith (and no funding to get accreditation) leaving limited options available.

What our members told us would make a difference

Ultimately more funding is needed for DFV support and prevention that meets the housing, health and legal needs of women. We also heard that more support is needed for:

- The expansion of the Staying Home Leaving Violence program.
- Early education in schools and for young boy and girls on healthy and safe relationships.
- Programs that are grounded in community, and have targeted support for local, Aboriginal and CALD needs.
- Specialist services to support children and young people that are experiencing or have experienced domestic and family violence. These services need to be child-centred and trauma informed.
- Investment in residential Men's Behavioural Change Programs and other perpetrator interventions.

Next steps

This year, NCOSS is calling on the NSW Government to invest in the delivery of child-centred, trauma informed services targeting children and young people, and commit to the delivery of, at a minimum, a service in metropolitan Sydney, one in regional NSW, and an Aboriginal community-controlled service. This investment will enhance the evidence base of models of service delivery that are child-centred and trauma informed.

Regional spotlight: Kids Can Women Can

Kids Can is an eight-week group work program for children aged 8-12 years who have experienced domestic and family violence.

Children engage in a range of therapeutic activities, which address the impacts of violence and build children's self-esteem confidence and resilience.

The course also educates children on appropriate protective behaviours and safety strategies. Mothers are also encouraged to attend the *Women Can* support group. The program has been positively evaluated.



Housing

Introduction

We all need a place to call home. Without a safe, secure home, people cannot work towards a better life for themselves and their families. They're more likely to be unwell, are at greater risk of harm, and are less able to access opportunities such as employment and education.

Across NSW, we heard that housing affordability is a major concern. A growing number of people and their families simply cannot afford safe and securing housing. With more people renting, and renting for longer, we need to ensure that renters can experience the same security and comfort in their homes as homeowners. We also heard the private rental market is simply not a viable option for many people.

We also heard concerns about the growing number of people experiencing homelessness, and the significant unmet need for support services tailored to the needs of specific groups. Finally, we heard there needs to be greater focus on accessibility across all models of housing.

What can you do?

Across NSW we heard about the types of things that would make a difference in our communities. If you have any other ideas or want to get involved in our work in the below areas, please contact the NCOSS Advocacy team on (02) 9211 2599 or advocacy@ncoss.org.au.

Housing affordability

What we heard

In Sydney and in many regions across NSW we know the waitlists for social and affordable housing are simply too long, exceeding 10 years in many locations.

At the same time, rental affordability is at an all-time low. Communities told us the lack of affordable housing means that people on low incomes are being forced to live in houses that fall far below acceptable community standards, or to move further from transport and services where they risk isolation and poor access. We also heard that many people are sacrificing necessities such as food and electricity in order to pay their rent, while others are entering into debt.

In Sydney there are almost no rental properties affordable for people on low incomes. There is also growing pressure on the rental market in many regional areas. In the North Coast, for example, we heard the large number of properties being let through AirBnB has left fewer available to local residents. Similarly, large infrastructure projects such as the Pacific Highway upgrades are drawing on the supply of low-income rentals. In regions such as the Murrumbidgee, rental prices escalate in

Spotlight: Are real estate agents part of the solution?

Across NSW, various initiatives bring together housing providers (including real estate agents) and service providers supporting vulnerable clients, to create a shared collaborative perspective. These events, such as regular breakfasts in the Clarence area, provide a linkage and information exchange to deal with issues on a case by case basis.



response to demand from seasonal workers, while the Illawarra and the Central Coast are impacted by population growth in Sydney and locals earning local wages now compete with commuters on Sydney incomes.

What our members told us would make a difference

There is widespread consensus that we need a significant and sustained increase in social housing stock, together with a suite of policies to increase the availability and accessibility of affordable housing. There was also support for:

- A HELP-style loan scheme for bonds that could be repaid when the property is sold, when a certain level of equity is reached, or when the estate is finalised.
- Investigation of “shared lives” models, which matches people who require some assistance with individuals or families who can provide accommodation and/or support.

Next steps

NCOSS will continue to advocate for increased investment in social and affordable housing. We played a key role in establishing the NSW Government’s Social and Affordable Housing Fund, and our advocacy continues to shape the roll-out of this fund. Our previous 2017-18 Pre-Budget Submission and our SAHF positioning paper highlighted the need for a stronger regional and remote focus – advice the NSW Government has taken on board in Phase 2 of the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) announced by Premier Berejiklian. Phase 2 will also prioritise older women.

Homelessness

What we heard

We heard about the growing number of people being pushed into homelessness, with particular concern about the increase in the number of young people and the number older women experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

While for some groups there are strong linkages between housing affordability and homelessness, for others the lack of support services plays a critical role. People who are not being properly supported include those with complex mental health issues, people who experience episodic illnesses, people with acquired brain injury and people living with HIV.

While social housing is increasingly been seen as an interim solution, we heard that there is a small percentage of people who will require permanent supported housing. Investment in housing can result in savings in other parts of the service system, and this should be factored into decision-making processes.

What our members told us would make a difference:

- Investment in housing models appropriate to the needs of particular cohorts at risk of homelessness, for example older women.
- A ‘housing first’ approach that aims to end chronic homelessness in NSW.



- Increased investment in supported accommodation and service models such as Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI).
- Repurposing older buildings as accommodation or support services.

Next steps

In our Pre-Budget Submission 2018/19, NCOSS is calling for investment of \$45 million over 4 years in five youth foyers in regional NSW and \$22 million in housing models appropriate to the needs of older women.

We need to mobilise our communities for this change to happen. NCOSS has prepared an advocacy kit for members to use to lobby their local MP.

Regional spotlight: Youth Foyers

“Youth foyers” give young people access to affordable accommodation linking to training, employment and other support services. Work is underway to develop youth foyers in a number of regions including **Western Sydney**, the **Hunter** and **Wagga Wagga**.

The Government has also recently announced the development of **Foyer51**, focusing on young people in the first 18 months of leaving out-of-home care.

The planning system and policy settings

What we heard

Existing policy settings have not achieved an increase in housing supply at the affordable end of the market. We heard concern that instead, policy levers are pushing prices up and benefiting investors rather than providing homes for people that need them. In the Central Coast, for example, there is a large proportion of vacant properties. More intense intervention is needed to address this issue.

While we’ve seen strong community commitment to addressing housing issues, we also heard numerous examples of instances where existing policies and processes have not supported innovative, community-based responses. The complexity of planning processes also has an impact on affordability.

Our members are also deeply concerned that planning processes are not responsive to the needs of the community. This is manifest in a lack of focus on ensuring access to important infrastructure such as community centres, green space, childcare and schools, and in the mismatch between the types of dwellings being built and the actual need present in the community.

What our members told us would make a difference

There is very strong support for the introduction of inclusionary zoning in Sydney and in regional centres across NSW. Other suggestions from members include:

- Ensuring Local Government plays a role in affordable housing.
- The introduction of a vacancy tax.
- Longer term leases to promote stability.

Next steps

NCOSS has been a strong advocate for inclusionary zoning including through the recent Greater Sydney



Commission planning processes. We will continue to advocate for this where possible.

As part of our work in this space, NCOSS also sits on the Health Planning Expert Working Group which provides advice and guidance on strategic opportunities to utilise the NSW planning and transport planning systems to promote human health across the State.

The private rental market

What we heard

In addition to concerns about affordability, we heard that many people have difficulty accessing the private rental market due to discrimination, a lack of documentation or issues with their rental history.

For those in private rentals, the lack of security is a major concern. There is a need to strengthen tenant's rights and this is particularly important given the current policy focus on transitioning people out of social housing and into the private rental market. When people do not have secure housing they cannot build strong social connections, and if forced to move this can disrupt relationships and affect access to services. The cost of moving also has a significant financial impact.

We also heard that for those people who have trouble maintaining their tenancies there is a lack of support services. Access is particularly problematic outside major regional centres. While some products designed to support vulnerable people to enter the private rental market are working well, more support is needed to ensure a successful tenancy in other cases. The practice of rental bidding was also raised as a concern, as it further disadvantages people on low incomes.

Members were pleased about the NSW Government's commitment to investigate the "build to rent" model of housing, where newly built properties are bought and managed by corporate investors, who make them available to long-term renters.

Regional spotlight: Opportunity Knocks

This consortium of housing and service providers supports vulnerable tenants to build skills and capacity to exit the social housing system. Participants are provided with a subsidised rental property and a personal coach, who links them with capacity building supports. Participants who have achieved their personal goals at the end of the 2 year program, are assisted into longer term housing.

What our members told us would make a difference

- Removing the no grounds termination clause from the Residential Tenancies Act.
- Increasing investment in Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Services – there has been no increase in funding in real terms for 15 years despite the significant increase in the number of rental households.
- Stopping the practice of rental bidding.
- Allowing housing providers to take on an initial leases for vulnerable clients, allowing the tenant to prove their suitability.
- Shifting the pattern of investment to encourage institutional investment in housing.



Next steps

NCOSS is a strong supporter of the **Make Renting Fair** campaign which is calling for current provisions in tenancy legislation that allow evictions for 'no grounds' (i.e. no reason) to be removed. The FONGA (Forum of Non-Government Agencies) Housing Working Group is also supporting this campaign and has written to both the Premier and to Minister Kean calling for better protections for renters. If your organisation is a member of FONGA and you would like to get involved, let us know.

Housing accessibility

What we heard

In many of our consultations there was a strong focus on the lack of housing appropriate to the needs of people with disability. We need an increase in accessible housing stock if we are to realise the goal of providing people with disability with choice and control over their lives.

In Sydney, there was particular concern that mobility needs are not being properly taken into consideration in the move towards higher density living.

For people who require home modifications, key issues include resistance by landlords in the private rental market, and the lack of eligibility for funding for people who live in housing owned by community housing providers.

What our members told us would make a difference

- A NSW Affordable Disability Housing Strategy building on the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) with a focus on accessibility. The Fund could enable proof of concept trials to encourage innovation. Some money should be put aside for investment in regional areas.
- All new social housing should be fully accessible.
- Encourage rent to buy schemes to allow people on lower incomes to enter the housing market.
- Expand shared equity schemes, which are helpful in increasing access to home ownership.
- Accessibility should be required in affordable rental properties.

Next steps

NCOSS will continue to advocate for an integrated housing policy, incorporating higher standards of universal accessibility across all new housing in NSW. Through our involvement in the Greater Sydney Commission planning processes, and submissions to review of planning regulations guidelines, we have argued that:

- The minimum universal standard of accessibility should be the Liveable Housing Australia silver standard of accessible design, and;
- New developments should include targets for the incorporation of accessibility higher standards.

These issues will be a key priority of the FONGA Housing Working Group.



Justice

Introduction

Fair and equal access to the justice system is a fundamental right and the cornerstone of a just and civil society. But, as we learnt in our community consultations, many people experiencing disadvantage are denied this right because of inherent barriers in the system.

In our consultations, we heard that Aboriginal people, people with mental health conditions, and people with cognitive disability are particularly vulnerable to legal issues and face significant challenges when trying to access help to solve their legal problems. In turn, the services providing this legal help are stretched and under-resourced, impacting on their ability to meet the needs of their clients.

Our members also told us more needs to be invested in services and programs that divert Aboriginal people at every point in the justice process, from contact with the police, to attending court, to entering and exiting custody. They told us these programs are urgently needed in rural communities where a high proportion of Aboriginal people live and access to these programs is limited.

What can you do?

Across NSW we heard about the types of things that would make a difference in our communities. If you have any other ideas or want to get involved in our work in the below areas, please contact the NCOSS Advocacy team on (02) 9211 2599 or advocacy@ncoss.org.au.

Access to justice for people with complex needs

What we heard

It is generally acknowledged that people facing disadvantage experience higher levels of legal need and legal problems than their counterparts. This was confirmed in our consultations.

For instance, we heard that people with a disability and mental health conditions are vulnerable to numerous disadvantages such as poverty and social isolation, and that these disadvantages not only affect their ability to access justice but also increase their likelihood of coming into contact with the system as victims, defendants, or offenders.

They also face several barriers to accessing justice, including lack of physical access, and lack of support and adjustments (such as an Auslan interpreter). There is also a lack of information in accessible formats about their legal rights, what to expect in court, and conditions of an order.

In consultations, we were reminded of how far we have come and how far we still have to go in closing the gap for Aboriginal people in the areas of health, education, housing, employment, and of course, justice.

We heard the disadvantages many Aboriginal people face in these areas are likely to compound their need for and problems with accessing help from the legal system. And these barriers come in the form of challenges around literacy, hearing problems, disability, mental health issues, drug and alcohol dependencies and poverty.



Our members told us Aboriginal people are likely to have complex legal needs that stem from various causes involving family or other trauma, disability, conflict and isolation, and that addressing these needs requires special care, extra resources and legal providers with a wide range of skills and cross-cultural sensitivity. We heard unmet legal needs can contribute to social problems like poverty, homelessness and unemployment, and if left unaddressed may escalate to criminal issues. For example, failure to resolve a debt-related issue can lead to larger fines or imprisonment.

Finally, communities in Western NSW and the Far West told us remoteness and geographical isolation act as particular barriers to accessing legal help in these regions. We heard these barriers stem from a lack of affordable and reliable transportation, staff shortages, and cultural barriers.

What our members told us would make a difference

We heard from our members that meeting the legal needs of disadvantaged groups has to be a major priority of justice policy in NSW, given that a substantial proportion of legal matters are concentrated within these groups. We also heard the most effective way to target unmet legal need is through a combination of direct services (advice and self-help) and strategic activity (education, advocacy and law reform), that includes:

- A well-invested wrap-around legal services system that delivers intensive case management and addresses multiple interrelated problems.
- More highly targeted services to allow for more intensive and specialist support for the most vulnerable clients. This includes investment in the Aboriginal Legal Access Program to enable community and Aboriginal legal services to increase access and provide effective culturally appropriate legal services to Aboriginal people.
- An expansion of civil law outreach programs to communities of high need especially in regional and remote locations.
- More funding and support for targeted, culturally appropriate community legal education to vulnerable people and communities, particularly for Aboriginal people in remote communities.
- Greater support for the appropriate use of pro bono services to complement government-funded legal assistance.

Next steps

As a first step, our Pre-Budget Submission 2018/19 is calling for the NSW Government to boost investment in culturally appropriate, community-based legal assistance services for Aboriginal people.

We are also calling for the Government to continue funding disability advocacy services that provide vital support to people with disability, and help them to safeguard and exercise their rights.

We need to mobilise our communities for this change to happen. NCOSS will be lobbying the NSW Government to adopt these recommendations and has also prepared an [advocacy kit](#) for members to use to lobby their local MP.

NCOSS is also keen to start a conversation about promoting research into unmet legal needs and will look for opportunities to advocate for a 'mixed model' approach that provides assistance to people across a large geographical area who have a broad range of legal problems, different capabilities, and are experiencing varying levels and types of disadvantage.



Services are stretched, costly and can't cope with demand

What we heard

Our members told us that the justice system needs to do more to respond to and address the legal needs of people facing disadvantage. We heard that Aboriginal people and people with mental health conditions are particularly vulnerable to falling through the gaps in the justice system and ending up in the wrong parts of it, like prison. We heard one of the reasons this is happening is because services providing legal assistance are stretched, under-resourced and can't cope with demand.

Communities are concerned that the government will no longer fund the Disability Justice Support Program because of reforms to advocacy services in NSW, meaning people with a disability will not be properly supported when they need help with their legal problems. This is problematic when we hear about carers already being left covering debilitating legal expenses for situations occurring during critical states of vulnerability for their loved one.

We also heard Aboriginal and community legal services in Far West NSW face challenges regarding their ability to attract and retain staff because of high living costs, limited suitable housing, and isolation. They must also deal with unpredictable funding streams that may lead to employment contracts not being renewed. Unsurprisingly, these realities undermine the effectiveness of these services.

We heard Aboriginal legal services and other legal assistance services do not have the capacity to address the multitude of legal needs with which Aboriginal people present. We heard they have to prioritise criminal matters out of necessity, leading to significant gaps in service provision for other areas of law, such as family and civil law. We heard these gaps are particularly acute in remote areas where a higher vulnerability to legal problems is prevalent.

The burden of demand also means solicitors in legal aid services have a limited amount of time to gather information about a person's case, which may not be enough when working with people with a mental illness. In many cases they are only able to spend as little as 20 minutes.

We also heard concerns about the lack of court support services, and the shortage of Aboriginal language interpreters and Mental Health Court Liaison Officers as of the most pressing gaps affecting access to justice.

What our members told us would make a difference

There are lots of things government and the community services and groups can do to make the justice system more responsive to the needs of vulnerable people. The following are some suggestions from our members:

- Provide legal assistance services with funding to meet the civil, family and criminal legal needs of vulnerable people.
- Continue to fund the Disability Justice Support Program and advocacy services to enable people with

Regional spotlight: Regional Youth Support Service

Regional Youth Support Service (RYSS) in Gosford runs the Indigenous Justice Program to provide intensive casework (and in some cases, housing) to young Aboriginal men and women between 14 and 18 years of age who are in contact or at risk of coming into contact with the juvenile justice system.



intellectual disability and mental health conditions to be properly supported in the justice system.

- Increase funding for specialist Aboriginal women's programs within mainstream specialist women's legal services.
- Develop a workforce plan that will enable state-wide coverage of legal assistance services. This plan should include incentives to attract and retain solicitors in areas experiencing difficulties recruiting solicitors.
- Fund the expansion of court support services such as Mental Health Court Liaison Officers and language interpreters.

Next steps

Our advocacy work in the next 12 months will focus on urging the government to invest more in legal assistance services and programs to help vulnerable communities reduce contact with the justice system, including on the recommendations in our Pre-Budget Submission.

Aboriginal people need more help to reduce contact with the system

What we heard

While we heard stories of hope and resilience when people talked to us about the progress being made in important areas of Aboriginal health, housing and education, we heard a different tale in relation to their level and rate of imprisonment. We heard Aboriginal people are being incarcerated at ever increasing rates, and the justice system seems to have no answers for it.

Communities told us the criminal justice system is increasingly and inappropriately being used to deal with people with drug and alcohol and housing problems because of a specific lack of culturally appropriate support services to meet the unique needs of Aboriginal people.

In Aboriginal communities, we heard that sending more of their young people to jail is not helping those people, nor is it acting as a deterrent to discourage other young people from getting involved in crime.

We were told the lack of appropriate housing for Aboriginal people exiting prison was the most significant reason why they reoffend. Many said former inmates were being released into homelessness, sleeping rough, in hostels or into over-crowded houses with people who were still engaged in drug-taking or criminal activity. Members also described a distinct lack of support both immediately prior to release and after being released from prison. They said that support, targeted to the individual's needs, along with secure housing, was a missing element in their experience and is critical to breaking the cycle of recidivism.

What our members told us would make a difference

Evidence shows that prisons are the most expensive response we have to criminal behaviour. There are cheaper and more effective ways to respond to these challenges. All levels of government must do better in this regard. At the very least, communities told us the NSW Government should:

- Explore justice re-investment approaches that divert money and resources from prisons and punitive measures to strategies and solutions that are community-led and break the cycle of Aboriginal



imprisonment. These should include:

- Implementing a throughcare model of post-release support aimed at supporting integration and reducing re-offending. This includes investment in housing and intensive casework.
 - Taking steps to reduce the imposition of short custodial sentences by increasing the availability of alternative community-based sentencing orders
- Set a justice target that closes the gap in the imprisonment rate of Aboriginal people.
 - Invest increased resources into services and programs that strengthen communities and address the underlying causes of crime, leading to lower rates of imprisonment and less money being spent on prisons.
 - Invest in culturally responsive and appropriate drug and alcohol treatment programs to address addiction and one of the major causes of imprisonment among Aboriginal people living in rural and remote communities.

Next steps

Our Pre-Budget Submission is also calling for the NSW Government to invest in diversionary programs to reduce young Aboriginal people's contact with the justice system, and in post-release programs that focus on continuity of support.

NCOSS also works in various committees and working groups that focus on reducing Aboriginal people's contact with the justice system. These include the Juvenile Justice Committee, the Youth Justice Coalition, Justice Health Community Reference Group, and the Traffic Fines and Infringements Working Group. We will use the collective knowledge and strength of these groups to influence change in the area of Aboriginal people's involvement in the justice system.

NCOSS will also be holding a New Perspectives Forum in November with organisations involved in reducing Aboriginal imprisonment rates using a justice reinvestment framework. The justice reinvestment projects in Bourke and Cowra will be showcased to our members with the aim of gaining valuable insights for future policy development and advocacy in this area.

Regional spotlight: Just Reinvest

A Justice Reinvestment approach is being trialled in Bourke and Cowra with the aim of gaining insights into the complex issue of incarceration and its associated impacts on small and remote communities.

The evidence-based project aims to show that strong and healthy families are the best way to prevent crime, build healthy communities and save on building prisons.

