



Annual Report 2024-25

NCOSS 
NSW Council of Social Service

About NCOSS

The NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) is the peak body for the social service sector in NSW. With more than 350 members and a wider network of organisations and individuals who share our values, we work to make NSW free from poverty and disadvantage.

We advocate, collaborate and connect, as an independent public voice, to build inclusive communities where everyone can thrive, supported by a strong, diverse and effective social service sector.

Our work is guided by the real experiences of people facing poverty and disadvantage and the community organisations that support them. We work closely with communities and partners to create credible, evidence-based solutions. By teaming up with government, the private sector, and other stakeholders, we're able to maximise impact and make a real difference.

Acknowledgement of Country

NCOSS acknowledges First Nations peoples as the sovereign custodians of Country, which was never ceded. We pay respect to Elders of past, present and future generations.

We acknowledge, respect and value the distinct culture, customs and practices present in the many and diverse tribal nations across NSW.

Cover Art

Cover art is by student artist Lucy, Kindergarten, Ashcroft Public School - inspired by Wassily Kandinsky.



NSW Council of Social Service

Phone: (02) 9211 2599
Email: info@ncoss.org.au
Gadigal Country, Yirranma Place,
Level 1, 262 Liverpool Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010

www.ncoss.org.au



Contents

About NCOSS	2
Contents	3
Year in Review	4
Our Vision, Values, Purpose & Goal	8
President's & CEO's Message	9
GOAL 1	11
Advocacy Reports & Research	12
Government Engagement & Advocacy	20
GOAL 2	24
Community Engagement & Collaboration	25
Sector-wide Initiatives	28
Training & Capacity Building	30
Member & Community Event Support	31
GOAL 3	32
Flagship Community Project	33
Working Alongside First Nations people	34
Lived Experience Advisory Panel	35
Communications	37
A Renewed Membership System	38
NCOSS Board Members 2024-25	39
Statement of Comprehensive Income	40
Statement of Financial Position	41

Year in Review

Poverty research and advocacy

In 2024-25, NCOSS continued to shine a light on the stark realities of poverty and disadvantage across NSW. Our landmark report, **Lasting Impacts: The Economic Cost of Child Poverty in NSW**, released in November 2024, revealed the staggering \$60 billion annual economic cost of child poverty in the state. This first-of-its-kind research in Australia modelled costs across crucial areas like education, health, and homelessness. We ensured its findings reached a wide audience, securing a front-page story in the Sydney Morning Herald and engaging directly with Ministerial offices and departments to discuss policy solutions. (For more, see page 12)

Our Cost-of-Living Report, **Impossible Choices: Decisions NSW communities shouldn't have to make**, highlighted that low-income households, including single parents and First Nations people, are still severely impacted by rising costs. This critical work generated significant media attention and led to important parliamentary briefings, strengthening our advocacy for targeted support. (For more, see page 14)



Sustainable sector - Secure Jobs and Funding Certainty Roadmap, PLSL & SCHADS advocacy

Throughout 2024-25, NCOSS actively engaged with the **Secure Jobs and Funding Certainty** (SJFC) Leadership Group, a joint initiative by NSW Government and the Community Services peak representatives towards a more sustainable social service sector. We played a pivotal leadership role in the development and release of the SJFC Roadmap in April 2025. (For more, see page 21)

The **Portable Long Service Leave** (PLSL) Scheme for the NSW social service sector commenced on 1 July 2025. This reform allows workers to accrue long service entitlements even when moving between employers, and recognises the essential work they do. NCOSS played a pivotal role in the design of the scheme alongside organisations such as the ASU. (For more, see page 22)

NCOSS has also been actively responding to the Fair Work Commission's (FWC) review of the **Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services** (SCHADS) Industry Award. We welcomed the review's objective to remedy potential gender-based work undervaluation and, following the FWC's preliminary decision in April 2025, NCOSS has been working closely with our members, the ASU, the NSW Government, and the national Councils of Social Service (COSS) network to assess its implications. This consultation is informing our ongoing advocacy to ensure any new award structure recognises the complex and diverse capabilities of our workforce and protects pay.

Commencing Community Organisations Disaster Adaptation (CODA) Project

The new **Community Organisations Disaster Adaptation (CODA) Project** officially commenced, building on the success of the Community Sector Disaster Capability (CSDC) Project. Funded through the Disaster Ready Fund Round 2 – a joint Australian and NSW Government program – CODA strengthens disaster resilience through better collaboration between the community, community organisations and emergency management agencies. (For more see page 28)

Emergency Responses & Disaster Resilience

NCOSS actively supported communities through various disaster and climate adaptation efforts in 2024-25, checking in with our members and ensuring they had access to up-to-date support information to help them respond to the emerging crises on the ground. This included:

- The severe weather, power outages and flooding in Far West NSW in October 2024
- The severe weather and storms that impacted areas from the Mid North Coast to the Riverina in January 2025.
- The impacts from Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred Severe Weather in the Northern Rivers, Mid North Coast, Hunter and the Tablelands during March 2025. We also participated in National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) **National Coordination Mechanism** meetings.
- The severe weather and flooding in the Mid North Coast, Hunter and the Tablelands in May 2025. (For more see page 29)

Going to communities and organisations in regional, rural and remote NSW

Our commitment to connecting with members across regional, rural and remote NSW was a significant focus in 2024-25 enabled by the additional, recurrent NSW Government funding we received commencing 2023-24. Events included Regional Member Meetings and Forum of Non-Government Agencies.

In April 2025, NCOSS partnered with Linking Communities Network (LCN) to host a successful **Riverina Regional Forum in Wagga Wagga**, bringing together over 150 participants from more than 60 regionally-based NGOs. Attendees engaged in vital discussions about critical shortfalls in sector funding, which have led to a sector in crisis, featuring innovative funding practices from Pay What It Takes. (For more, see page 26)



Riverina Regional Forum in Wagga Wagga

Cyber Security

NCOSS sought to bolster the cyber resilience of the social services sector this year. We launched **Hidden Vulnerabilities: Cyber Security and Essential Community Services**, a critical report in May 2025, developed in collaboration with WorkVentures and 14 sector organisations. This report, featuring case studies and actionable recommendations for government and NGOs, was supported by a joint media release and extensive social media engagement. We also co-hosted **two webinars** with WorkVentures in April and May, highlighting key findings and offering practical mitigation strategies to the sector. A dedicated **online resources page** was also launched, providing ongoing support and information, accessed 739 times by June 30. (For more, see page 18)

School Gateway Project, *Mirrung*

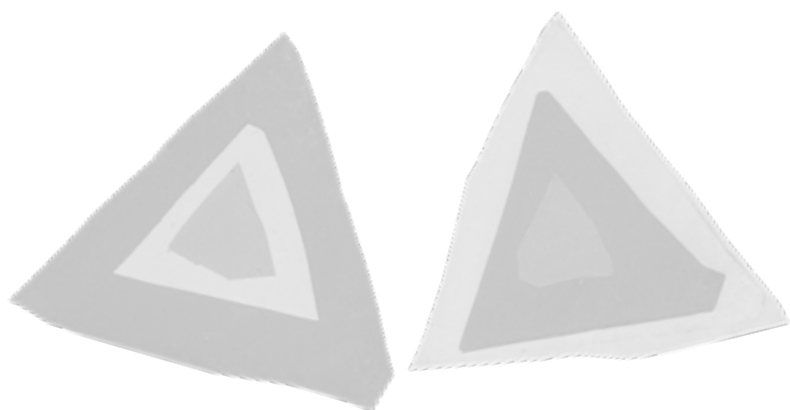
The **School Gateway Project** at Ashcroft Public School continued to achieve transformative outcomes. In August 2024, the project was awarded the Department of Education Secretary's Award for an Outstanding School Initiative. Our **Mirrung Impact Report 2024**, released on 5 March 2025, coincided with front-page coverage in the Sydney Morning Herald. The report evidenced **improved student attendance, wellbeing, and academic growth**, along with an enhanced sense of connection, belonging, and safety among students, parents, and staff. Key initiatives included the launch of a **paediatric clinic**, a new, more direct arrangement with Homes NSW for family support, and the roll out of a parent classroom volunteering program. (For more, see page 33)

Health

NCOSS advocated for health equity, undertaking significant research and engagement throughout the year, with a special focus on regional NSW. We launched **Access Denied: Australians Locked Out of Quality Healthcare**, which highlighted challenges across GP, specialist and dental services with affordability, wait times, and patient satisfaction, particularly in regional areas and for specific cohorts like single parents. Our research revealed almost 1 in 3 people in regional areas can't afford to see a dentist, and across NSW 1 in 4 people visit the emergency department because their GP wasn't available. We also commenced research to quantify the cost of preventable dental hospitalisations in NSW. (For more, see page 16)

At the Riverina Regional Forum, we facilitated a panel discussion of health experts with lived and sector experience and from the NSW Ministry of Health. NCOSS also provided evidence on regional access issues and other priorities to assist the work of the NSW Parliament. This included inquiries into barriers to health and development checks for NSW kids, the proposal to split the Hunter New England Local Health District, and the available foundational and disability supports for children and young people in the state.

NCOSS continued to engage with our members and partners in the health sector through convening regular meetings of the Health Equity Alliance (For more, see page 27) We also attended NSW Ministry of Health NGO Advisory Committee meetings, and joined with peak members to attend the 2024 Drug Summit and advocate for a strong commitment from the NSW Government to implement outcomes and improve conditions for the AOD sector.



Lived Experience informing policy & advocacy

Lived and living experience voices continued to be a priority in NCOSS's advocacy and policy work in 2024-25. **Our Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP)** currently includes two members, Emma Warren and Makeeta Stubbings. The LEAP contributed to our patient experience research, offering critical perspectives on the issues affecting those in poverty. Emma co-presented the research with NCOSS to the NSW Ministry of Health, sharing her own experiences of navigating the health system. At the Riverina Regional Forum, lived experience advocates also shared powerful insights. Riverina local Emily Lightfoot delivered a powerful personal account of systemic failures impacting chronically ill and low-income individuals in regional Australia. (For more, see page 35)

Vale

It was with profound sadness that NCOSS acknowledged the passing of **Amir Bodenstein** in August 2024. Amir was a fierce advocate, dedicated to sharing his experiences of rough sleeping and residency challenges finding suitable housing to improve policy responses to homelessness. He played a pivotal role in developing NCOSS's Lived Experience Framework, and was the LEAP's founding member.

Amir was deeply passionate about eliminating poverty. He used every opportunity to speak up for those without a voice, determined that no one should have to endure the challenges he had faced. Amir approached his advocacy with deep thought and humility, always generous with his time and experiences. His contributions to NCOSS's pre-budget submissions, post budget analysis and research projects were significant, ensuring that lived experience remained at the heart of our work.

Amir has left a lasting impression on NCOSS and his fellow LEAP members. His legacy will continue to guide and inspire our commitment to ensuring the voices of people with lived experiences remain central to driving change.



NCOSS Lived Experience Advocates, Makeeta Stubbings and Amir Bodenstein with NCOSS Policy Lead, Andrea Angeles, at the 2024 NCOSS Post Budget Breakfast at NSW Parliament House.

Our Vision, Values, Purpose & Goal

Our Vision

A NSW free from poverty and disadvantage.

Purpose

We are an independent public voice collaborating, advising and advocating for a better deal for people experiencing poverty or disadvantage, and the social service sector that supports them.

Our goal

Goal 1:

Amplify the experience of people affected by poverty or disadvantage to inform inclusive & equitable policy and decision-making

Goal 2:

Identify and advocate for the foundations of a sustainable, connected, strong and diverse social service sector

Goal 3:

Focus NCOSS on core priorities for impact and sustainability

Values



Courage

We have the courage to advocate and act for those who are voiceless and those who support them.



Integrity

We act, speak and support with integrity and honesty as an independent public voice for the disadvantaged.



Fairness

We strive for a state free from poverty, where everyone can prosper no matter their background.



Inclusion

We believe that a more equitable society starts with a more inclusive society where people's differences are valued and their needs recognised.

President's & CEO's Message



2025 marks 90 years of NCOSS's service in NSW, and 2024-25 was a year for both looking forward and looking back. Arguably, the NSW social service sector hasn't faced so many unprecedented challenges since 1935, the Great Depression when NCOSS was formed. We all know what these headwinds – as economists call them – are. Each, individually, makes steering the course harder. Together, they're creating a perfect storm for our sector and the individuals, families and communities we are here to serve:



The wealth gap is widening

The gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" is widening, accelerated by cost-of-living pressures, slow wage growth, and the chronic lack of social and affordable housing. For too many, having a full-time job is no longer enough to pay the rent, keep the lights on, and put food on the table.

Access to opportunity is shrinking

We're moving further and further away from the idea of Australia being the land of the fair go. Opportunity is ever more unevenly distributed, based on factors like postcode, gender, age, disability and race. With that comes a growing sense of disenfranchisement and erosion of social cohesion.

Climate change is hitting hard

With climate change, severe weather events are increasing in frequency and severity. Inevitably, those hit hardest are the people already struggling. Like those with chronic health problems, and those who can't afford the cost of adequate heating in a cold snap or cooling in a heat wave.



Fast-paced technological change is driving uncertainty

The pace of technological change is exacerbating the existing “digital divide,” reshaping how we live, how we access services and what information we receive. While it brings opportunity, who benefits is uncertain, undermining trust.

Serious investment in critical social infrastructure is lacking

There’s a chronic lack of investment in our social infrastructure – the safety net supporting those who need help now, and the services designed to tackle root causes. As demand escalates, our sector continues to struggle with - wages and conditions that make attracting and retaining skilled people harder, increasingly complex compliance requirements, one-size-fits-nobody program eligibility requirements in a fragmented service delivery system, and the ongoing expectation we can continue to do more with less.



NCOSS, our members, and the COSS network across Australia have been working together to overcome these challenges. Some highlights of 2024-25 included:

- We released groundbreaking research, showing the economic cost of child poverty in NSW is a staggering \$60 billion a year. It establishes a lens for decision makers to assess policy decisions, to maximise well-being for future generations.
- The NSW Government committed to five-year funding for our sector and establishment of a Jobs Compact under the Secure Funding, Contract Certainty Roadmap. This will allow our members to focus on their mission rather than jumping through bureaucratic hoops and create better career paths for our most valuable assets – our people.
- The Impact Report showed our Mirrung project at Ashcroft Public School is making a material difference in the students’ lives by reimagining what a school is, and better connecting its communities with the services they need.

- The Fair Work Commission found gender-based undervaluation in the SCHADS Award. We’re now advocating with our members, the ASU and the COSS network for fair and sustainable outcomes.

In 2024-25, NCOSS has also been working on our new Strategic Plan. This Plan aims to position us so we and our sector can better deal with the challenges we are facing, as we look towards 2035 and 100 years of NCOSS’s service to NSW.

We look forward to working with you and encourage you to join us as members, as we are stronger together. You can join us here: www.ncoss.org.au/membership/join-ncoss-membership-categories

John Robertson & Cara Varian
President & CEO

GOAL 1

Amplify the experience of people affected by poverty or disadvantage to inform inclusive & equitable policy and decision-making.

Our primary goal in 2024-25 was to amplify the voices of people in NSW who are experiencing poverty or disadvantage. We did this through submissions, reports, public campaigns and political advocacy.

We highlight the authentic stories of the people most affected by poverty and disadvantage as we believe this helps decision-makers to prioritise inclusive and fair policies.

Advocacy Reports & Research

Lasting Impacts: The Economic Cost of Child Poverty in NSW

We know that poverty during childhood has lifelong impacts, affecting a child's health, education, and future opportunities.

In November 2024, we released a report, **Lasting Impacts: The Economic Cost of Child Poverty in NSW**. This landmark report, prepared for NCOS by Impact Economics and Policy, is the first time the economic costs of child poverty have been systematically quantified in Australia.

The report exposes how failing to invest in our children undermines individuals and our state's long-term economic performance.

The research brought together a substantial evidence base to model the annual economic costs of child poverty across five key domains: education, health, child maltreatment, crime, and homelessness. The analysis calculated both the immediate costs related to children currently living in poverty, but also the long-term costs for the estimated 580,000 adults in NSW who grew up experiencing frequent poverty.

It revealed the total annual economic cost of child poverty in NSW is an extraordinary \$60 billion, equivalent to 7.6% of our Gross State Product. This includes \$25 billion in direct costs to government and the economy and a further \$34 billion in costs related to diminished health and life expectancy. While 15.5% of all children in NSW live in poverty, this is heavily concentrated in areas experiencing disadvantage like South-Western Sydney, where rates are as high as 28.4%.

\$60 billion

is the total annual economic cost of child poverty in NSW.

1 in 6

children

in NSW live in poverty.

580,000

adults in NSW

grew up experiencing frequent poverty.

Continued next page

Our report shows that poverty is preventable and provides key recommendations for the NSW and Australian Governments. The most critical actions are:

- Increasing income support payments, particularly Parenting Payments, and indexing them to community living standards so families are not forced to live in poverty
- Providing adequate and affordable housing by ensuring a minimum of 10% of all housing is social and affordable, and increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance to keep up with private rental costs
- Guaranteeing universal access to quality childcare by ensuring all children can access at least three days a week and removing the Activity Test on the childcare subsidy.

The launch of Lasting Impacts garnered significant attention, featuring a **front-page story in the Sydney Morning Herald** and resulting in **88 media clips** with an estimated audience reach of **956,000**. Following its release, NCOSS actively engaged with **Ministerial offices, MPs**, and government agencies including **NSW Health, Department of Education** the Department of Communities and Justice (**DCJ**) to discuss the findings. We also delivered a presentation for the DCJ Executive Leaders Team in April. The extensive involvement of sector stakeholders and pre-briefings proved instrumental in fostering deeper and broader conversations around implementing the proposed policy options.

70%

of Parenting Payment recipients live in poverty.

Children from households living in poverty are

over 3 times

more likely to experience poverty in adulthood.

Nearly

30,000 children

in NSW experience homelessness annually, with approximately 80% of these children experiencing homelessness again as adults.

Impossible Choices: Decisions NSW Communities Shouldn't Have to Make

We know that rising cost-of-living pressures are making it difficult for people to afford essential needs like housing and food. In September 2024, we released our annual Cost of Living in NSW research, **Impossible Choices: Decisions NSW Communities Shouldn't Have to Make**.

Led by The Institute of Public Policy and Governance from the University of Technology Sydney, the research explores the impact of rising living costs on **low-income households and people living below the poverty line** across NSW. A particular focus was placed on the challenges faced by households with dependent children. For the first time, this year's research included longitudinal analysis, revealing that the sharp increase in financial pressure reported in 2023 has **not improved and, in some cases, has worsened**.

The research showed low-income households are under even more pressure than last year, struggling to afford basic housing, food, and medical costs. Single parents, First Nations households, carers, and people with disability continue to be disproportionately impacted. Single parent families are the hardest hit, with our research showing 85% live in housing stress, 82% have no emergency savings, and 92% went without at least one essential item in the last year.

92%

of single parents went without at least one essential item in the past year.

29%

increase in the number of households going without a meal since 2022.

over 68%

of households are in housing stress, spending over 30% of their income on housing.

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GOAL 1

Our report included key recommendations for the NSW and Australian Governments. Some of these recommendations were:

- Reduce poverty and its impacts by lifting Commonwealth income support payments like Jobseeker and introducing universal access to early childhood education
- Provide affordable, safe and healthy homes by increasing social and affordable housing and implementing better protections for renters
- Eliminate food insecurity by implementing a universal school food program in NSW and providing adequate funding for emergency food relief services
- Increase the availability, awareness and participation of cost of living supports.

The report received substantial media coverage, with **74 clips** reaching over 840,000 people. A parliamentary briefing on the findings was attended by over 20 politicians and staff in September 2024.

Looking ahead, our 2026 research will re-frame to focus on Voices of Poverty, aiming to capture the lived reality of poverty through new methodologies.

1 in 5

First Nations households experienced homelessness, a rate three times higher than non-First Nations households

74%

of low-income households went without health and wellbeing essentials

“ *I have to work more hours for less money, not being able to spend quality time with kids and family as I'm working, sleeping, or trying to keep my head above water. And I'm drowning, and really cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel, my health is deteriorating and it's so stressful trying to live.”*

Single parent with dependent children,
Hunter Valley.



Access Denied: Australians Locked Out of Quality Healthcare

We know that access to quality healthcare is a cornerstone of a fair society, yet many people in NSW are being locked out. In September 2024, we released our report, **Access Denied: Australians Locked Out of Quality Healthcare**, which reveals a general decline in patient experience since 2020. We worked with the University of Canberra on the report, which explores the challenges people face with affordability, wait times, and levels of satisfaction when accessing GPs, medical specialists, and dental services.

The research revealed that the patient experience of the healthcare system has generally worsened, with the cost of care becoming the most common and troubling barrier. We found a dramatic increase across NSW in the proportion of people delaying or forgoing visits to a GP due to cost, which has risen by 246% since 2020. A new trend has also emerged. While our 2020 research found a strong link between poor patient experience and economic disadvantage, it is now people living in regional NSW who are most impacted. Further, the proportion of people on middle and high incomes unable to afford healthcare has increased at roughly the same rate or slightly higher than the overall population. In other words, growing cost of living pressures are impacting access to healthcare across income brackets and across the whole of society.

246%

increase across NSW in people delaying or not seeing a GP due to cost since 2020.

1 in 4

people in NSW (23%) visited an emergency department for their most recent issue because their GP was unavailable.

People in regional NSW are almost **twice as likely** as those in Greater Sydney to delay seeing a medical specialist due to cost (24% v 13%).

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GOAL 1

Our report identifies several priorities for action to address these growing inequities in our health system. The most critical actions for government are:

- Improve the affordability of healthcare and reduce out-of-pocket costs, particularly for vulnerable populations
- Enhance healthcare access and availability in regional areas to address the growing divide between the city and the country
- Provide targeted support to groups experiencing the most significant declines in healthcare experiences, including single parents, families, and older people
- Address the growing pressure on health services, including wait times and time spent with patients.

The report's release generated **118 media clips**, particularly across regional areas, including a **front-page story in the Illawarra Mercury**, reaching an estimated audience of 400,067. NCOSS briefed Ministry of Health representatives and continues to meet with stakeholders. This research aims to inform local community and service planning and advocate for targeted policies to address healthcare disadvantage, especially in regional areas and for specific vulnerable groups.

Single parents in regional NSW are

4x more likely

likely to wait one month or more for public dental care than the NSW average (24% v 6%).

The proportion of older people (65+) in Greater Sydney delaying GP visits due to cost increased by over

1,500%
since 2020

“ I’m overwhelmed by the constant diminishment of services coupled with new or increasing charges at every juncture. Some days I feel like I’m suffocating, burdened heavily with each new cost.”

Emma, aged 48, Newcastle



Hidden Vulnerabilities: Cyber Security and Essential Community Services in NSW

We know not-for-profit (NFP) organisations face disproportionate challenges in securing their digital infrastructure due to limited resources and the highly sensitive data they hold. In 2025, we released our report, **Hidden Vulnerabilities: Cyber Security and Essential Community Services in NSW**, which shows just how significant this risk is to the vital services people rely on.

We worked with our partners at WorkVentures on the report. It provided an in-depth assessment of the cyber security posture of 14 NFPs in the NSW community services sector, with revenues between \$2 million and \$20 million. The assessment examined each organisation across four key domains: operational, legal and regulatory, systems, and network security.

The research showed that the NSW social service sector has substantial cyber security gaps. Worryingly, none of the 14 organisations we assessed met the minimum benchmark for a mature security position. We found that fewer than half had implemented basic controls like effective password management and cyber security training. There was also an over-reliance on cyber insurance and external IT providers, with 64% having conducted no due diligence on their supply chain.

0%

of assessed organisations met the minimum benchmark for cyber security maturity.

93%

of assessed NFPs have cyber insurance, compared to just 20% of Australian small and medium businesses.

70%

of organisations do not have a cyber security training program for all staff.

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GOAL 1

Our report included key recommendations for government and the sector. Some of these were:

- Provide increased, ongoing core funding to help NFPs improve their capacity to implement effective cyber security controls
- Establish a national cyber security standard for NFPs that is achievable for organisations with limited resources and budgets
- Utilise government infrastructure and expertise to provide direct support to the sector, such as shared cyber security training programs.

The report's launch was supported by a **joint media release** with WorkVentures and DVNSW, significant social media engagement, and our CEO did **radio interviews on ABC Sydney and 2GB**. Two webinars on the findings and mitigation strategies, held with WorkVentures in April and May 2025, received positive feedback from participants. A dedicated online resources webpage, accessed 739 times by June 30, and our further engagement with other peaks, has demonstrated of the importance of this research for the sector and concerns about adequate management of cyber risk.

64%

of organisations had not conducted any due diligence on their critical IT and software providers.

Less than 1/2

(43%) of organisations had implemented effective password management and cyber security awareness training.



Government Engagement & Advocacy

NCOSS actively engages with the state and national governments through various mechanisms to advocate for people affected by poverty and disadvantage and for a sustainable social service sector. This includes making pre-budget submissions, undertaking post-budget analyses, participating in taskforces, and making direct submissions to parliamentary inquiries.



Dom Rowe, Homelessness NSW; Stu Cameron, Wesley Mission; Cara Varian, NCOSS; Evelyne Tadros, Mental Health Coordinating Council; Leo Patterson Ross from Tenants' Union of NSW at a press conference on budget day.

NSW Budget: 2025-26

In **December 2024**, NCOSS submitted **two pre-budget submissions for the 2025-26 Budget**. The first, **Communities on the Edge**, highlighted the needs of people living in poverty and experiencing inequality, covering issues such as housing, food insecurity, oral health, and early intervention for children and families. The second, **A Sector in Existential Crisis**, focused on the immense challenges facing the social service sector, particularly inadequate funding in the face of overwhelming increases in demand and costs. NCOSS met with multiple stakeholders, including NSW Treasury, to discuss these submissions.

A **Budget Analysis workshop** was run on **17 June 2025**, facilitated by Catherine McGovern from Evaluate. This practical workshop helped 24 participants from the social service sector engage more effectively with the state budget process, covering its purpose, context, structure, and interpretation. It also discussed changes to the NSW Budget format for the 2025-2026 financial year, including the Performance and Wellbeing Framework.

The NSW Budget was handed down on **24 June 2025**. NCOSS coordinated a digital lock-up at Yirranma Place for other peak bodies, issued a media release, and held a press scrum outside Parliament House alongside Homelessness NSW, the Tenants' Union of NSW, the Mental Health Coordinating Council, and Wesley Mission which achieved TV and radio coverage. NCOSS released our analysis the day after the Budget, welcoming some investments but noting the failure to deliver critical social infrastructure investment to support vulnerable communities.

Other Government Engagement

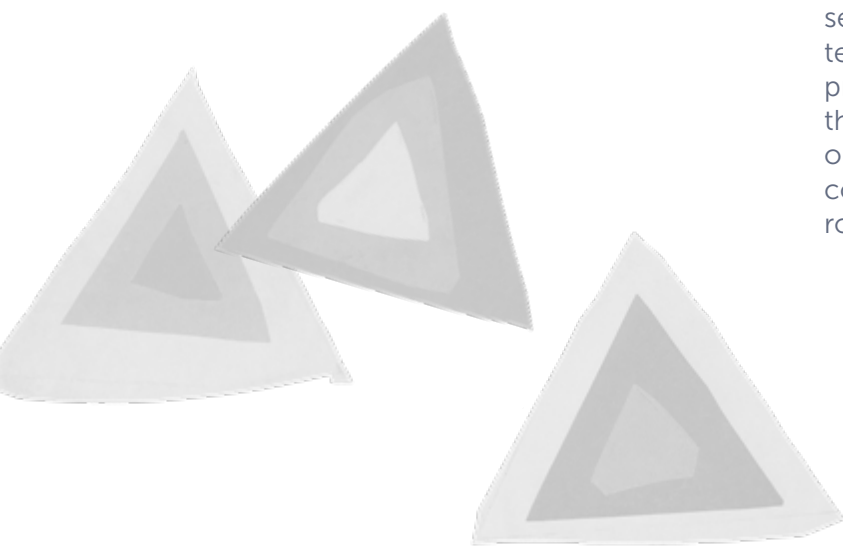
NCOSS played a leading role in numerous government initiatives and reviews. We were a foundation member of the **Independent Panel on Gaming Reform**, aiming to reduce gambling harm through trialing cashless gaming technology and reviewing regulations on electronic gaming machines (i.e. pokies). NCOSS advocated for universal and mandatory account-based gambling to help people control spending and protect communities. Recommendations from this panel were delivered to the Minister for Gaming and Racing in November 2024. NCOSS also provided a submission to the **ClubGRANTS review**, calling for an overhaul to refocus the scheme on low-income and disadvantaged individuals.

In March 2024, NCOSS joined the **Secure Jobs and Funding Certainty Taskforce**, with its first formal leadership group meeting on 1 March 2024. Secure Jobs and Funding Certainty was an election promise by the NSW Government to acknowledge the value of the community services sector's essential work by committing to job security and long-term funding certainty.

The Taskforce brought together community services peak bodies, the Australian Services Union and NSW Government departments including Aboriginal Affairs, Education, Communities and Justice, Health, Reconstruction Authority, Treasury, and The Cabinet Office. The Taskforce focused on four key areas:

- **Longer term funding** - transitioning to contracts of five years or more
- **Funding framework** - the government and service providers collaborating to review how the sector is funded, including potential changes to the way in which pricing is determined
- **Jobs compact** - meeting the minimum labour standards, promoting stable employment, supporting workforce learning and ensuring diversity
- **Prequalification scheme** - minimising duplication in funding applications by service providers and streamlining government agencies' access to information.

In April 2025, the NSW Government released the Secure Jobs and Funding Certainty Roadmap detailing its commitment to strengthening the NSW social service sector. This was a significant achievement for the sector and the introduction of longer-term funding has commenced for some programs. NCOSS continues to work with the Department of Communities and Justice on the implementation of the government's commitments, including advocating for the full roll out of the Roadmap over 2026-2027.



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GOAL 1

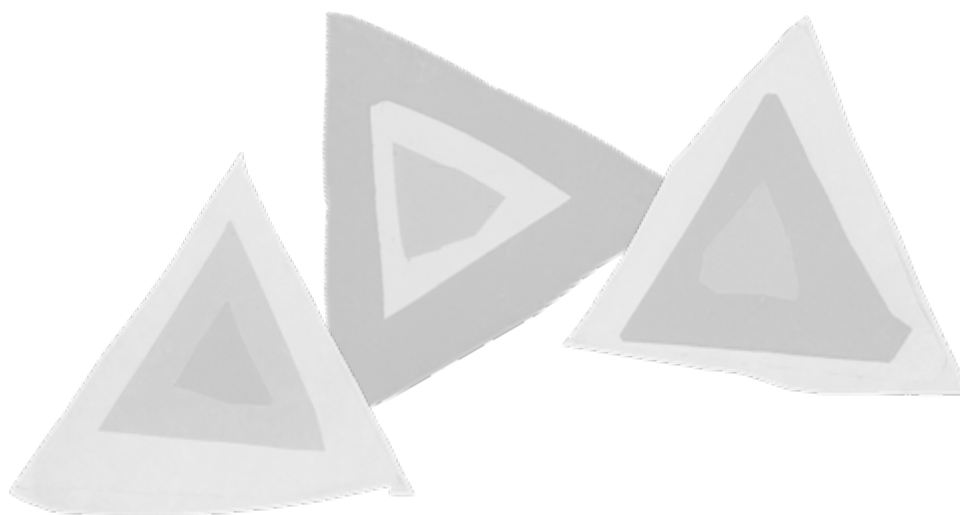
NCOSS also contributed to the **Regional Development Reference Group**, organised by the Department of Regional NSW, sharing insights on regional opportunities and challenges to guide the delivery of Regional Development Roadmap initiatives and inform the use of the Regional Development Trust Fund.

NCOSS has long championed the **Portable Long Service Leave Scheme**, and in June 2024, the NSW Parliament passed legislation to establish it, with the scheme set to commence on 1 July 2025. This scheme allows workers to accrue long service leave entitlements after seven years in the sector, regardless of whether they have worked for multiple employers, making a career in social services more attractive.

However, NCOSS has continued to advocate strongly to resolve two critical concerns: the **unfunded levy** (1.7% of ordinary wages) and the **administrative burden**. We estimate the total additional cost of this levy to the sector to be **\$84 million per year**. NCOSS has engaged in extensive discussions with Ministers and Treasury officials, who reported the government does not intend to increase funding to cover this new cost. In response, NCOSS organised 18 other peak bodies to send joint letters to responsible Ministers and Department Secretaries, asking for action. We continue to raise this issue as a test of the government's commitment to the Secure Jobs and Funding Certainty Roadmap.

NCOSS engaged in **national advocacy**, participating in campaigns like Raise the Rate by ACOSS and being a member of the lead group for the Raise the Age campaign for NSW. NCOSS is an active campaign partner with End Child Poverty Australia, having hosted an event to develop the campaign's initial strategy.

This year the effects of climate change and disasters have had a significant impact on the sector and people experiencing poverty, stretching already limited human and financial resources. Evidence to more fully understand these impacts and direct advocacy is emerging as a priority. In **disaster resilience**, NCOSS leads the **Community Organisations Disaster Adaptation (CODA) Project**, navigating complex funding negotiations with the NSW Reconstruction Authority and participating in weekly Health & Wellbeing Subcommittees.



Some other work we did in 2024-25 to advocate for change and influence decision-makers

- In **July 2024**, NCOSS made a submission to the **NSW Digital Inclusion Strategy**.
- In **August 2024**, NCOSS made a submission to the NSW Parliament's **Inquiry into improving access to early childhood health and development checks**.
- In **August 2024**, NCOSS appeared at the NSW Parliament's **Select Committee on Statutory review of the NSW Reconstruction Authority 2022**.
- In **September 2024**, NCOSS appeared at the NSW Parliament's **Inquiry for a framework for performance reporting and driving wellbeing outcomes in NSW**.
- In **October 2024**, NCOSS with the COSS Network made a joint submission to the **Inquiry by the Australian Senate's Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System**.
- In **November 2024**, NCOSS made a submission to the NSW Parliament's **Inquiry on the prevalence, causes and impacts of loneliness in NSW**.
- In **November 2024**, NCOSS appeared at the NSW Parliament's **Improving access to early childhood health and development checks hearing**.
- In **February 2025**, NCOSS appeared at the **NSW Parliament's Community Safety in regional and rural communities hearing**.
- In **March 2025**, NCOSS made a submission to the **Consultation on Third Party Exclusion in NSW clubs and hotels**, highlighting key risk areas and recommending cashless gaming and extended mandatory switch-off times for gaming machines.
- In **March 2025**, NCOSS made a submission to the **Consultation on Facial Recognition Technology in hotels and clubs**, recommending a cashless gaming system and mandatory electronic gaming machine 'switch off' times from 12 pm to 10 am, with no exceptions.
- In **April 2025**, NCOSS made a submission to the **Western Sydney Affordable Rental Housing Contribution Schemes in 5 council areas**, highlighting the need to prioritise affordable housing in Western Sydney and recommending it remain permanent and priced at 30% of household income.
- In **April 2025**, NCOSS made a submission to the NSW Parliament's **Inquiry into the Health Services Amendment (Splitting of the Hunter New England Health District) Bill 2025**, recommending a focus on improving healthcare access, service planning, and resource allocation, with any structural change accompanied by significant investment and community-led planning.
- In **May 2025**, NCOSS submitted evidence and appeared at a hearing of the NSW Parliament's **Inquiry into Workers Compensation Insurance (focused on entitlements for psychological injury)**, advocating for reform that balances scheme sustainability, worker protections, and financial risks to community service organisations from unsustainable premium increases.
- In **May 2025**, NCOSS made a joint submission with the COSS network to the **Fair Work Commission's SCHADS Award Review**, welcoming the view that the current SCHADS structure is not fit-for-purpose but raising concerns about proposed classification structures risking pay reductions for many sector employees.
- In **June 2025**, NCOSS submitted evidence to the NSW Parliament's **Select Committee on Foundational and Disability Supports Available for Children and Young People in New South Wales**, highlighting the need for an equity lens and a whole-of-system reform approach in partnership with lived experience individuals and the social services sector.
- In **June 2025**, NCOSS represented on **Disaster Recovery Health & Wellbeing Subcommittees** convened by NSW Reconstruction Authority, providing advice on sector needs and roles in disasters and using sector data to gauge recovery needs.

GOAL 2

Identify and advocate for the foundations of a sustainable, connected, strong and diverse social service sector. This is essential given the cost-of-living crisis severely impacting many NSW residents.

NCOSS has taken part in many initiatives to boost the sector, including advocating for a portable long service scheme, working with government on the delivery of its Secure Jobs and Funding Certainty election commitment, creating opportunities to connect and run training sessions for social service organisations, and also building disaster resilience with place-based sector organisations.

Community Engagement & Collaboration

NCOSS cultivates strong relationships across the sector through engaging forums and meetings, fostering collaboration, information sharing, and advocacy. These platforms are crucial for understanding the challenges faced by our members and developing evidence-informed solutions.

Forum of Non-Government Agencies (FONGA)

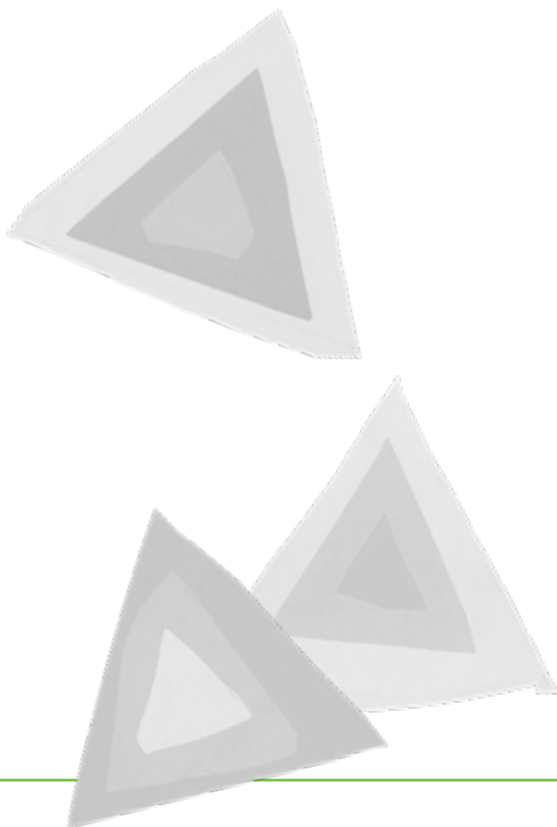
Our FONGA meetings, held online bi-monthly, are a vital space for members to share insights and collaborate on common challenges.

In August 2024, FONGA members received a confidential preview of NCOSS's Cost of Living Report results. Discussions covered updates on Local Community Services Association's (LCSA) 50th anniversary, the Mental Health Coordinating Council's Workforce Solutions paper, the Disability Royal Commission response, and Vinnies NSW's updated policy position statements.

In February 2025, FONGA included a presentation on Federal budget advocacy to lift income support payments to a liveable rate from ACOSS and an update from the Department of Customer Service on the Portable Long Service Leave Scheme.

The April 2025 meeting featured the third Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee (EIAC) report and DVNSW's report on critical support for temporary visa holders experiencing domestic and family violence.

In June 2025, DCJ gave an update on the Secure Jobs and Funding Certainty Roadmap. NCOSS extended an invitation to members to take part in the CODA Project Community of Practice.



Regional Members Meetings

Engaging directly with regional members is a core priority for NCOSS. Regional Members Meetings (RMM) were held online every three to four months and provide a platform for conversation and connection, highlighting the experiences and unique challenges faced by people living in regional, rural and remote communities.

In September 2024, members challenged Michael Tidball, Secretary of the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), on issues of sector sustainability and unmet community need. He committed to visiting regional organisations to listen further.

In March 2025, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia gave an overview of the expanded pharmacist services through scope of practice reforms and the benefits for regional and remote NSW patients. Transport for NSW gave a briefing on the Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans (SRITPs), the long-term plans for the future of regional transport in NSW to address the evolving transportation needs. They also outlined how communities and organisations can be involved in consultation and feedback.

In April 2025, NCOSS partnered with Linking Communities Network (LCN) to host a successful **Riverina Regional Forum in Wagga Wagga**, bringing together over 150 participants from more than 60 regionally-based NGOs. Attendees engaged in discussions about critical shortfalls in sector funding, which have led to a sector in crisis, featuring innovative funding practices from Pay What It Takes.

A panel on the need for equitable, inclusive and accessible health and related services included Jessica Horner from People With Disability Australia, Michelle Maxwell from the Regional Health Division of Health NSW, and Kirrilly Salvestro, deputy CEO of LCN. A satellite session explored the lack of services for women with migrant and refugee backgrounds and their children escaping domestic or family violence, featuring a presentation from DVNSW on their newly released **Breaking Barriers research report: Critical support for temporary visa holders experiencing domestic and family violence in NSW**.

While positive, feedback highlighted that twice-yearly forums are insufficient for meaningful engagement. In response, our new Community Services Peaks Program (CSPP) Service Plan commits to **visiting every DCJ district group each financial year**, a significant increase from previous years. This expanded approach, including two Sydney-based forums by calendar year-end, will ensure NCOSS listens and amplifies the unique needs of communities across NSW.

In June 2025, we hosted Minister for Regional Transport, Jenny Aitchison, to discuss her priorities in regional transport planning and opportunities for input. We also facilitated input for the NSW Budget.



Riverina Regional Forum in Wagga Wagga

Health Equity Alliance

The Health Equity Alliance met four times in 2024-25, bringing together non-government organisations, peak bodies, and academics to discuss policy responses aimed at improving health outcomes for disadvantaged people in NSW. These meetings serve as a platform for NCOSS to consult and collaborate with the health NGO sector and incorporate a health equity lens into our broader policy and advocacy, research agenda and advocacy around projects like the 2024 Drug Summit and NSW Health's virtual care projects.

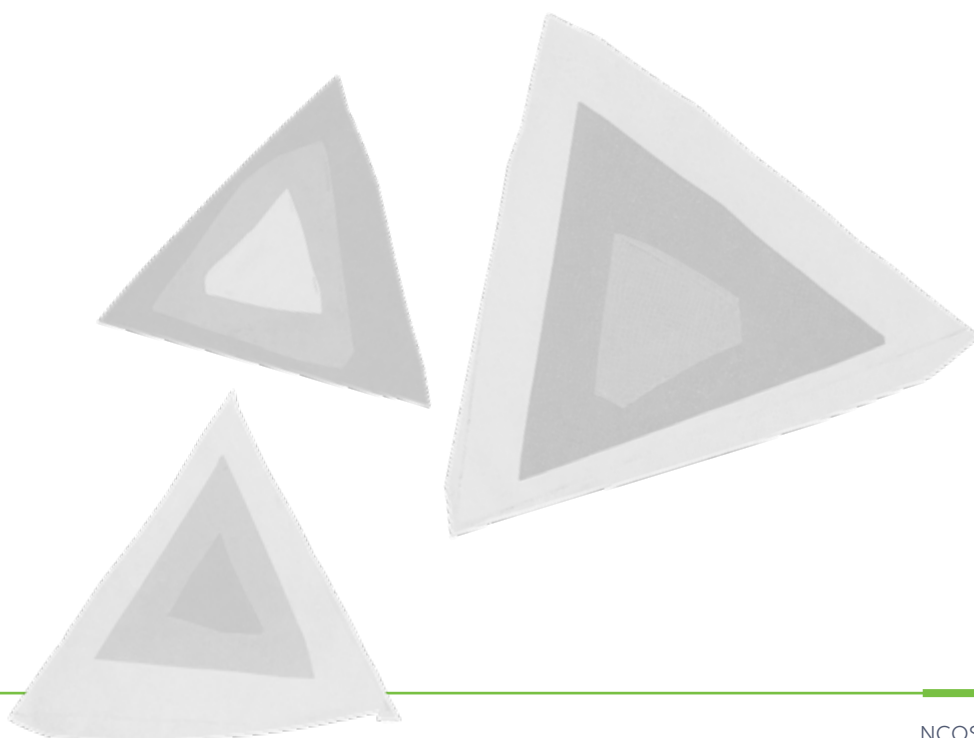
In these meetings, members from non-government organisations, peak bodies, academics, and others come together to discuss and advise on policy responses. Our aim is to improve health outcomes for people facing poverty and disadvantage in NSW.

August 2024 meeting: featured a Carers NSW presentation on Carers' Financial Strategy and Wellbeing.

November 2024 meeting: included a presentation on the Reading Writing Hotline from TAFE NSW.

February 2025 discussions: addressed emerging issues such as the mass psychiatrist resignation and included a presentation from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), on the Joint Statement on Family Violence by Regulators of Health Practitioners.

May 2025 meeting: involved discussions on the 2024 Drug Summit report and a presentation by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, concerning the expanded scope of practice for pharmacists.



Sector-wide Initiatives

NCOSS Sector Sustainability Survey 2024

In October 2024, NCOSS surveyed the NSW social service sector including NCOSS member organisations on their financial sustainability. Over 120 respondents shared their experiences and insights about financial challenges and coping strategies. The results confirmed the sector is in an existential crisis:

- Almost two thirds of the organisations saw their costs exceed the funding received
- 86% said that their costs exceeded the Government indexation they received
- Over half of the organisations are likely to make further cuts to survive
- 90% said their financial situation is as bad, or worse, than the early days of COVID.

The survey added to a growing body of evidence that a funding reform is urgently needed to sustain our sector which delivers critical services for communities living in poverty and disadvantage. NCOSS has used the results to advocate for sector sustainability, including in our Pre Budget Submission for 2025-26 and the delivery of the government's Secure Jobs and Funding Certainty commitment.

Community Organisations Disaster Adaptation (CODA)

The CODA Project is a partnership between NCOSS, AbSec (NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation) and the Local Community Services Association, with place-based community organisations in Northern Rivers, Hawkesbury, NSW South Coast and Snowy Monaro.

Elements of the CODA Project contributing to sector-wide development include:

- NCOSS is delivering Disaster Resilience Community of Practice sessions, helping organisations understand the sector's roles across the disaster management cycle—preparedness, relief, recovery, and mitigation.
- Local Community Services Association are developing and delivering statewide sector training to build disaster readiness and resilience, embed risk reduction expertise and practice.
- AbSec (NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation) is leading Aboriginal sector engagement in the CODA Project.
- CODA Project learnings from place-based partner organisations are used to inform disaster resilience advocacy.

Emergency Responses & Disaster Resilience

NCOSS representation in NSW Government-led Health & Wellbeing Subcommittee meetings drew attention to staff trauma and resource strain in member organisations. The NCOSS **Flood & Storm Resources** webpage, which provides up-to-date disaster support information, continues to have high engagement.

We participated in the **Extreme Heat Awareness Campaign** and shared NCOSS Heat Resources for the sector. Together with the Local Community Services Association, we supported the **Resilient Villages Blue Mountain's Community Led Disaster Resilience webinar** which highlighted resident-led initiatives to tackle local disaster

threats. NCOSS was also represented at the **Carers NSW Collaborating for Inclusive Disaster Resilience Symposium**, presenting on the crucial role of community service organisations in disaster management. NCOSS attended the **launches of the Resilient Sydney Strategy, the Greater Sydney Heat Symposium** and the **NSW Disaster Adaptation Guidelines** to explore collaboration opportunities, leveraging our understanding of vulnerability caused by poverty and disadvantage.



Resilient Lismore. Summit Workshops

Training & Capacity Building

Parliamentary Inquiries Workshops

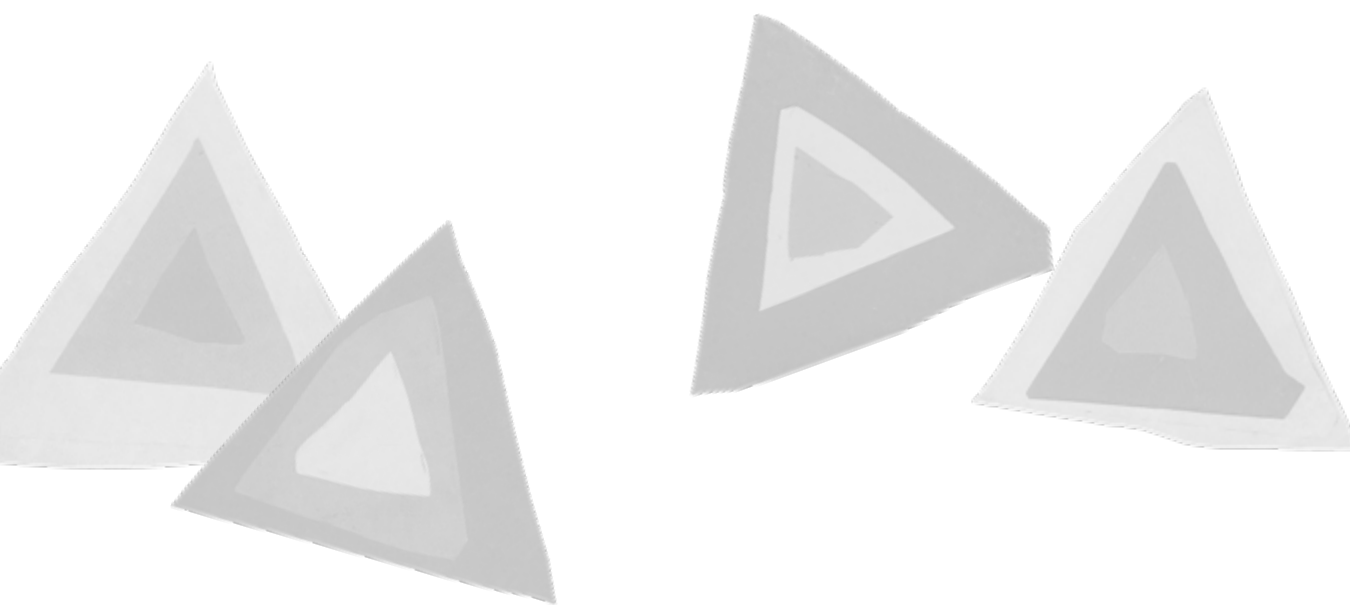
NCOSS continues to deliver the Parliamentary Inquiries Workshops, in collaboration with the NSW Legislative Council Committees Secretariat. These provided crucial training for sector representatives. The workshops equip participants with practical skills for effective advocacy, covering topics such as understanding the inquiry process, writing impactful submissions, and preparing to appear as a witness. Sessions were held in November 2024 and May 2025. Feedback consistently highlighted the value of practical exercises and direct exposure to a sitting Member of Parliament.

Budget Analysis Workshop

NCOSS hosted a Budget Analysis Workshop on 17 June 2025, facilitated by Catherine McGovern from Evaluate. This practical session was designed for sector representatives to better understand and navigate the NSW Budget process.

Cyber Security Webinars

Following the launch of our "Hidden Vulnerabilities" report, NCOSS collaborated with WorkVentures to deliver two Cyber Security Webinars in April and May 2025. These webinars focused on translating the report's key findings into actionable strategies for organisations to mitigate risks and strengthen their cyber security posture.



Member & Community Event Support

ZEST Awards

NCOSS sponsored the **ZEST Awards in June 2025**, the annual awards for the Western Sydney community sector. NCOSS staff and LEAP members Emma Warren and Makeeta Stubbings attended the ceremony. NCOSS member, the Western Sydney Community Forum (WSCF) expressed gratitude for NCOSS's sponsorship, highlighting the event saw a **record number of nominations and attendees**.

Financial Inclusion Network Conference

NCOSS actively participated in the **Financial Inclusion Network Conference** in March 2025, presenting a closing address on **Building resilience in a cost-of-living crisis**.

Neha Shah, Emma Warren, Makeeta Stubbings and Olivia Wright at the ZEST Award ceremony.



NCOSS staff at AbSec Family Fun Day celebrating NAIDOC Week



Other member events

NCOSS was proud to sponsor the **AbSec Family Fun Day** celebrating NAIDOC Week in Sydney in July; the **Local Community Services Association's** 50th anniversary conference held in August; **Waminda's** national conference Strong Women, Strong Community, Leading the Way in Nowra in September; and **Youth Action's** Youth Work Conference in Dubbo in October.

In March 2025, NCOSS took part in the **Sydney Alliance's** Federal Pre-Election Assembly in Parramatta and the **Hunter Alliance's** Federal Pre-Election Assembly in Newcastle. These Assemblies demonstrated the power of collective community advocacy and asked Federal decision-makers for concrete action on housing and renting, affordable and renewable energy and climate resilience.

NCOSS staff and LEAP member Makeeta Stubbings and lived experience advocate Samantha Bing at the Sydney Alliance Federal Pre-election Assembly



LEAP member Emma Warren and NCOSS staff member Michelle Shackleton at Hunter Alliance Federal Pre-election Assembly



GOAL 3

Focus NCOSS on core priorities for impact and sustainability.

Several projects this year have helped foster long-term positive change through community-centred programs and inclusive strategies.

Central to this was our ongoing commitment to the School Gateway Project, Mirrung, at Ashcroft Public School, where we continued to support students and their families in this community.

We established the Lived Experience Advisory Panel, and strengthened relationships with First Nations communities through our Reconciliation Action Plan.

Flagship Community Project - School Gateway Project, *Mirrung*

The **School Gateway Project**, a philanthropically funded partnership between NCOSS and the Ashcroft Public School in South-Western Sydney, is a place-based initiative that uses the school as the central hub to connect children and their families with holistic health and social support services that meet their educational, health and wellbeing needs. *Mirrung* means *belonging* in the local Dharug language. It reflects the project's family-centred approach, which is based on an understanding that for children to thrive, families need to thrive. Fundamental needs like food, clothing, and secure housing are prerequisites for effective learning.

The 2024-25 year saw significant advancements for *Mirrung*. In **August 2024**, the project was honoured with a **Secretary's Award for an Outstanding School Initiative** during Public Education Week and, in September, the ***Mirrung* paediatric clinic** successfully commenced with Dr Sathah Sivabalan contracted to deliver two clinics per term for the next two years. This will enhance equitable access to health services for Ashcroft students. Parent engagement at the school also improved over the year, with attendance at whole-of-school events such as the Annual Art Exhibition increasing substantially. Similarly, the delivery of parent training and social connection sessions saw a steady growth in engagement and connection of families to the school.

Quantitative data from **2024** highlights the hub's broad impact: **825 frozen meals** and **100+ food hampers** were distributed, **73 developmental assessments** for 4-5 year olds led to **51 students receiving support**, 48 students accessed **NDIS-funded allied health**, 10 students saw the ***Mirrung* paediatrician**, and 201 students received **free dental and vision check-ups**. Additionally, 510 students enrolled in **after-school clubs**, and 83 parents attended **adult education workshops**.

Ongoing work included negotiating a new arrangement with Homes NSW for direct family contact and facilitating queries. Additionally, a partnership for casework support with Uniting (Family Connect & Support) is also nearing finalisation. The *Mirrung* team expanded with the engagement of Student Learning Support Officers (SLSOs) fluent in Samoan and Swahili to improve cultural connectedness.

In **March 2025**, the ***Mirrung* Impact Report 2024** was released, coinciding with the Sydney Morning Herald's Education Summit. The report, profiled with an online story and a front-page photo, evidenced **improved attendance and student wellbeing**, as well as positive academic results.

Strategically, NCOSS actively engaged in a national Schools as Community Platforms working group. Advocacy efforts now focus on scaling this integrated model to additional schools within the Liverpool network, aligning with new Department of Education preschool builds. The 2025 evaluation, conducted by Social Outcomes to be launched in November 2025, will also include an examination of the impact of *Mirrung* on teacher workloads and wellbeing.

Working Alongside First Nations people

RAP Wrap Up

To mark the end of our initial **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)** in September 2024 a group of NCOSS staff visited Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Services on the NSW Central Coast. The visit was chaired by First Nations Partners and Advisors Group (PAG) Chair and Eleanor Duncan CEO, Belinda Field. As well as the opportunity to focus on the excellent services provided by the wonderful Eleanor Duncan team there were some big discussions including the achievements and challenges of the implementation of the RAP and the actions moving forward.

We reflected on how we could better put commitments to First Nations partners into action, facilitated by guidance from the PAG – a process that was, very much, the RAP in action.

First Nations Partners and Advisors Group (PAG)

The **First Nations Partners and Advisors Group (PAG)** plays a crucial role in identifying priorities for NCOSS. The PAG's priorities are central to the organisation's advocacy for transformational change in government, including NCOSS's involvement in the Secure Jobs and Funding Certainty Taskforce and the Raise the Age campaign.

First Nations representation on the NCOSS Board

First Nations representation on the NCOSS Board, with members like John Leha, Belinda Field and Jenni Beetson-Mortimer, ensures First Nations perspectives and leadership are deeply embedded within the organisation.

Free Membership for ACCOs and ACCHOs

The NCOSS membership review, which went to the board in October 2024, offers free membership for a period of 5 years for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs)

NCOSS has also developed **Guiding Principles for Working Alongside First Nations People**, outlining cultural protocols for staff engagement across diverse First Nations communities. To strengthen this integration, NCOSS established a new **Sector and Community Engagement Officer role**, filled by **Michelle Shackleton in November 2024**, specifically tasked with supporting the PAG, alongside engagement with members, especially in regional, rural and remote areas.

NCOSS staff members participated in a Decolonisation workshop run by Waminda in May 2025.

Lived Experience Advisory Panel

Emma Warren, member of the Lived Experience Advisory Panel shares her experiences with life on the poverty line in Newcastle:

“ This last year has seen little to no relief directed towards people like me, at a state or federal level. Indeed, as grocery prices, utility bills and all life costs continue to rise each year is getting harder than the last.

I'm a disability pensioner with multiple chronic illnesses and I can't get a free GP appointment. I have gone from having GP appointments every three weeks to now stretching it to six weeks when possible. My complex medical history means that I can't see any random doctor, it would take an expensive double appointment to catch up on my history. My GP bulk-billed me for as long as she could and was devastated when advising that she'd have to start charging me. When the NSW Government payroll tax exemption ended in 2024, the medical practice I attend opted to pass that on in the form of a new \$10 non-refundable fee per patient, per visit.

To those sitting in boardrooms \$10 may seem a small amount but add that to the cost of my essential over-the-counter medications almost doubling in the last year and exorbitant grocery bills. Where is all this extra money

meant to come from? Thankfully, I secured an affordable housing apartment in 2023 and have just marked two years in it. I would be homeless were it not for affordable housing, but it has also come with many challenges. My building's back door handle was broken for months (anyone could just walk in) and I spent countless hours lobbying the building owners and managers to fix it. It took from July to October just to get them to install a new lock to make the building secure and only after I reached out to an old family friend on the real estate's board did it get fixed. Being poor means a never-ending fight for basic needs and rights.

Being on the poverty line in such a wealthy country is challenging and disheartening. It's a constant fight for basic rights like timely specialist appointments and building doors that lock! I frequently find myself completely emotionally exhausted from having to endlessly fight and recount my struggles and traumas in order to be heard.

As a person on the edge of society, and a former scholar of Australian socio-political history, I can offer only this blunt and sobering assessment: Governments have made a choice to leave millions of people in poverty.

That is the hardest pill I have to swallow.”

Continued next page

GOAL 3

NCOSS remains committed to embedding the voices and experiences of people affected by poverty and disadvantage directly into its policy, advocacy, and research work through its **Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP)**. The implementation of the LEAP Framework, which began last year in partnership with lived experience advocate Amir Bodenstein, ensures lived and living experience is incorporated in a transparent, respectful, consistent, and supportive manner.

The **LEAP** currently has two members, Emma Warren and Makeeta Stubbings, and has been active throughout the reporting period, contributing significantly to NCOSS's work. Members provided valuable input on the **pre-budget submission**, shaped cost-of-living research, and contributed to health-related projects. At the **Riverina Regional Forum in April 2025**, local lived experience advocate **Emily Lightfoot** shared a powerful personal account of systemic failures in healthcare and disability support affecting chronically ill and low-income individuals in regional Australia. Similarly, at the **2024 Post-Budget Breakfast**, LEAP member **Makeeta Stubbings** offered her perspective on the cost-of-living crisis as a single parent, highlighting the importance of support in breaking cycles of trauma.

Further integrating lived experience, Emma Warren presented alongside NCOSS at the NSW Ministry of Health's **Health and Social Policy Branch meeting on 12 December 2024**, sharing her story as part of NCOSS's patient experience research and engaging with media upon its release. In the past six months, LEAP members have attended significant community events, including those run by the Hunter Community Alliance and Sydney Alliance, and attended the ZEST Award ceremony in Western Sydney. They also actively engaged in LEAP meetings to discuss the project's progress and strategies for better integration into NCOSS's policy and advocacy efforts.

The LEAP also completed a successful staff induction, a key step towards embedding the Lived Experience Framework across all NCOSS operations. In **June 2025**, LEAP members were among the eight community members, supported by NCOSS, to participate in strategic planning focus groups with consultant company Nous, ensuring lived experience informs the organisation's future direction.



LEAP members Emma Warren (left), Makeeta Stubbings (right), with Melanie Barnes, NCOSS Communications Officer (centre)

Communications

eNews

The fortnightly eNews remains a cornerstone of NCOSS's communication efforts. This newsletter is used to promote training and events, spotlight the work and impact of member organisations, share key initiatives, and disseminate information on research and policy reforms.

Media

NCOSS gained 467 media mentions between 1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025, with an estimated cumulative reach of 7,590,000 people.

New Website

NCOSS is also investing in digital presence, with a new website due to launch by the end of 2025.

Social media



Facebook and Instagram
4,000 followers



LinkedIn
4,800 followers

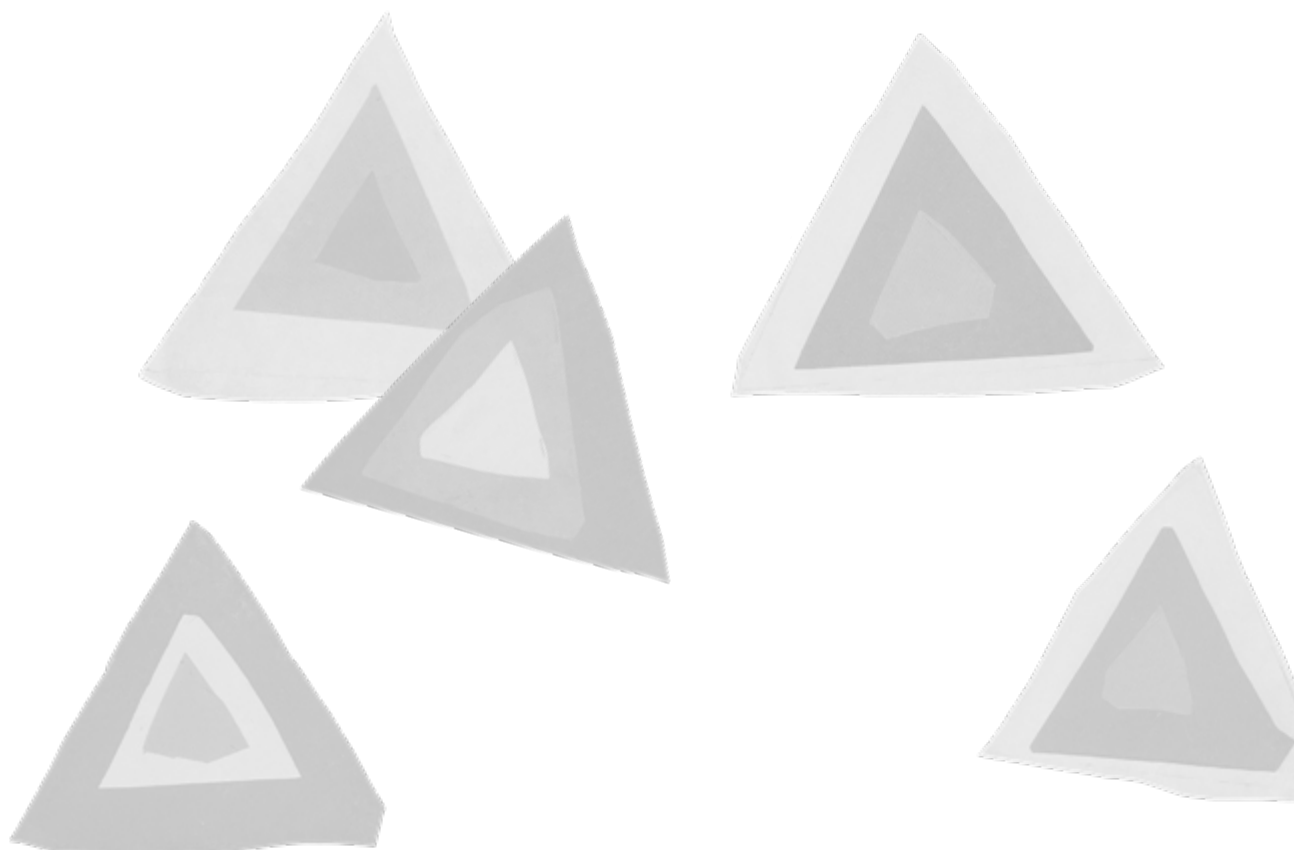
We've had a 20% increase in followers on LinkedIn in the past 12 months.

A Renewed Membership System

This year, we renewed our membership system to make joining NCOSS simpler, fairer, and more affordable for all.

To improve affordability, we recalibrated our membership tiers. This ensures fees are proportional to an organisation's size, making membership more accessible for small and medium organisations. Furthermore, to remove financial barriers for First Nations participation, we introduced fee waivers for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

We also simplified our membership process by transitioning all members from individual renewal dates to a standard 1 July – 30 June financial year cycle. To ensure fairness, one-off credits were automatically applied to any member with an overlapping payment from the previous system. This new, harmonised process provides greater clarity for members and improves our operational efficiency, creating a stronger foundation for the future. We thank our members for their cooperation during this important update.



NCOSS Board Members 2024-25



John Robertson
CEO, Foodbank,
NSW & ACT Limited
NCOSS President



Brad Webb
(Retired 2024 AGM)
CEO, Castle
NCOSS Treasurer
(July 2024-November 2024)



Mark Degotardi
CEO, Community Housing
Industry Association
NCOSS Treasurer
(December 2024-ongoing)



Belinda Field
CEO, Eleanor Duncan
Aboriginal Services



Elfa Moraitakis
(Retired December 2024)
CEO, SydWest
Multicultural Services



Elisabeth Shaw
CEO, Relationships
Australia NSW



Emma Maiden
General Manager,
Advocacy & External
Relations, Uniting NSW.ACT



Jenni Beetson-Mortimer
CEO, Northern Rivers
Community Gateway



John Leha
CEO, AbSec



Katherine McKernan
(Retired 2024 AGM)
Executive Director,
National Legal Aid



Simon Rice
Emeritus Professor



Wendy Foote
Associate Professor,
Newcastle University



Yolanda Saiz
Chief Executive Officer,
St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW

Statement of Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2025

	Note	2025 \$	2024 \$
Revenue			
Revenue	2	3,811,295	4,601,600
Interest revenue calculated using the effective interest rate method		52,997	26,437
Net realised and unrealised gains on financial assets held at fair value through profit or loss		171,476	135,302
Expenses:			
Employee benefits expense		(2,459,588)	(2,258,481)
Administration expenses		(31,637)	(42,587)
Brokerage and sponsorships expense		(37,326)	(19,000)
Conference expenses		(30,145)	(49,905)
Consultants expenses		(477,140)	(1,669,161)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	3	(6,149)	(8,777)
Insurance expense		(22,040)	(27,603)
Premises expenses		(111,954)	(115,759)
Travel expenses		(42,540)	(43,320)
Other expenses		(251,075)	(150,976)
Surplus for the year		566,174	377,770
Other comprehensive income			-
Total comprehensive income for the year		566,174	377,770

Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2025

	Note	2025 \$	2024 \$
Assets			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	936,590	715,012
Trade and other receivables	5	78,614	198,305
Financial assets	7	750,000	277,917
Other current assets	6	51,507	23,954
Total current assets		1,816,711	1,215,188
Non-current assets			
Financial assets	7	2,569,738	2,398,262
Plant and equipment	8	17,465	9,654
Other assets	6	-	57,914
Total non-current assets		2,587,203	2,465,830
Total assets		4,403,914	3,681,018
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	9	865,912	730,163
Provisions	10	40,543	30,724
Total current liabilities		906,455	760,887
Non-current liabilities			
Provisions	10	38,190	27,036
Total non-current liabilities		38,190	27,036
Total liabilities		944,645	787,923
Net assets		3,459,269	2,893,095
Equity			
Accumulated surplus		3,459,269	2,893,095
Total equity		3,459,269	2,893,095



NSW Council of Social Service

Phone: (02) 9211 2599

Email: info@ncoss.org.au

Gadigal Country, Yirranma Place,
Level 1, 262 Liverpool Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010

www.ncoss.org.au

