

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 23 February 2017

WA MPs must support our homelessness services

The community services sector is calling on all Western Australian politicians on both a state and federal level to stand up for the vital social housing and homelessness services in our state, which are under threat should the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) be axed in the Federal Budget in May.

WA Council of Social Service CEO Louise Giolitto said, "It is intolerable that funding to support some of the most disadvantaged people in our community could be placed on the chopping block".

"Across our state, nearly half of the funding for our 103 homelessness services in WA comes from the Federal Government. Without this funding many of these services will be forced to shut their doors."

"There is no two ways about this – cutting funding from these services will mean job losses, a decrease in available services, and more people experiencing homelessness on the streets and unable to access the support they need."

"With services already stretched to breaking point, the impact this will have will be catastrophic."

Over 80% of the funding that the State Government receives from the Commonwealth for homelessness programs is allocated to crisis and transitional accommodation services, which include women's shelters.

"We know that domestic violence is the reason that 70% of women seeking assistance from shelters do so. The Federal Government has made a commitment to support victims of family and domestic violence, which cannot happen if shelters are being forced to close."

The remainder of the funding is allocated to support services, including day centers, tenancy support programs and outreach programs all support the most vulnerable in our community including children.

"For it to be suggested that NAHA will be abolished without any alternative plan to provide for adequate social housing and homelessness services is deeply concerning."

"If the Federal government is considering reforms to NAHA, it should urgently convene a discussion with key stakeholders to develop a national plan that will support social housing and address homelessness and housing affordability, and then plan for transition to new arrangements with the sector's support."

"The only way to genuinely and effectively improve our homelessness services and provide the necessary levels of social housing is through consulting with the sector and service users, rather than slashing funding for vital essential services."

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