

Thursday 17 October 2013

Time for State to focus on what really counts: WACOSS

"The Western Australian Council of Social Service is calling on the State Government to focus on what really counts in next year's Budget," said Irina Cattalini, CEO of WACOSS today.

The Council launched its submission for the 2014-15 State Budget today, presenting the report "*What Really Counts: Investing for all Western Australians*" to Under-Treasurer Tim Marney.

"Western Australia is forecast to experience slower growth in the coming years. While revenue will continue to grow and circumstances remain largely positive for our State, there is increasing pressure on State expenditure to respond to the social service needs of our growing population."

"In this context we need to prioritise social expenditure to achieve the best outcomes for the community, and focus on those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged - to make wise investments in the social wellbeing of our community," said Ms Cattalini.

The Council has consulted extensively with its 300 members and the over 800 organisations who provide community services to hundreds of thousands of Western Australians every year to identify the key priorities for investment in the 2014-15 State Budget:

- Housing and Homelessness
- The Cost of Living
- Children, Young People & Families
- People with Complex Needs
- Sustainable Community Services State-wide

"Housing affordability for those on lower incomes is still the number one issue in our community, and the biggest single factor contributing to financial hardship for those households in our recent Cost of Living research."

"The Council is calling for greater investment in public and community housing, innovative approaches to increase institutional investment in the supply of affordable rentals, and preventative measures for vulnerable people at imminent risk of homelessness."

"Community services are being stretched further than ever before as they struggle with both an increase in the demand from growing population need, and demand for more intensive services from service users with multiple and complex needs. The only way we can balance these competing demands is to deliver smarter services, with better needs-assessment and cross-referral through well-connected community service networks," she concluded.

The PBS can be downloaded at: www.wacoss.org.au/files/PBS2014_15.pdf

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