
Homeless Services Cut Back Across WA

West Australian homelessness and tenancy services will be cut back from July 2016 as a result of the Commonwealth's failure to provide the necessary funding to support organisations' salary obligations, according to the WA Council of Social Service.

"Inadequate funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness from the Federal Government has led to the Department of Child Protection and Family Support cutting homelessness and tenancy services," said Irina Cattalini, WACOSS CEO.

"They knew that additional funding was required to meet rising service costs and pay for the salary obligations of service providers under the Fair Work Equal Remuneration Order, and yet they failed to respond in the Federal Budget."

"WA will see seven organisations providing five regional services and four metropolitan services have their funding reduced. There are over 9,500 Western Australians currently experiencing homelessness who risk being affected by the cuts and more than 17,000 requests for services already being turned away annually."

The Fair Work Commission Equal Remuneration Order was put in place in 2012, following concerted efforts by the community services sector to achieve fair and just wages for its largely female workforce. Additional funding was provided for other services funded through National Partnership Agreements, but homeless services were left out.

"We now face the untenable reality of cutting services to those in need to be able to pay fair and just wages. This is not the reform outcome anyone had in mind a decade ago when we began concerted efforts to address gender equity for our staff."

The lack of necessary funding has led to a reduction in services in a number of metropolitan and regional areas, and halved the brokerage allocation for all service providers other than those providing Safe at Home and Domestic Violence Outreach programs – despite domestic violence being proclaimed as a national priority.

"The future of homeless services is hanging on edge. The recent Federal Budget allocates no funding to the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness beyond June 2017 and there has been no commitment from the Government to address the ever-growing issue of homelessness."

Meanwhile housing and homeless organisations and industry groups are coming together to create a national campaign calling on major parties in the coming Federal election to recognise the key role affordable housing and homeless services play in supporting an inclusive and prosperous community and commit to long-term service funding.

"As the Federal Election campaigns shifts its focus to fairness and issues of disadvantage, we need all sides of politics to commit to guarantee adequate and sustainable levels of funding for homeless services," concluded Ms Cattalini.

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To arrange an interview today please contact Chris Twomey on 0407 725 025