

CSS NSW/ACT NSW Election Statement

3rd November 2022

Our three key strategic messages for
the candidates for the next NSW Parliament
to consider are:

- 1. To ensure there are enough resources to meet the demand for services for disadvantaged families, children, young people and for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.**

Catholic Social Service Agencies directly working with the community, tell us that recent events such as the pandemic, disasters, escalated cost of living and housing stress have contributed to an increase in family breakdown, family and domestic violence and increased need for financial, legal, child protection, mental health, and counselling supports.

We ask for bi-partisan agreement from the next NSW Parliament to increase the investment in support services for families, children and young people and domestic and family violence support services. This could include reducing the burden of inflation increases on administration and service costs, so that funds can be prioritised on essential services such as emergency food relief, domestic violence support and social services.

We also ask for a commitment to raising the age of all out of home care supports from 18 to 21 in the next term of parliament.

2. To ensure longer term capacity, investment and planning for social and affordable housing and rental properties and homelessness services, to meet the increasing demand.

Having a home, is a basic human right. Our member services which provide housing and homelessness services are already at full capacity. Yet there is an increased demand for affordable and social housing, affordable rental properties, and homelessness support services in NSW, which will be exacerbated by the current period of increased housing stress, family living costs and poverty.

We ask for bi-partisan agreement from the next NSW Parliament to increase investment in social housing, innovative housing models, homelessness support services and develop long term strategies to address housing stress, housing, and rental affordability. This work should be developed in consultation with the NGO sector and the community.

3. To enhance relationship, collaboration, and appropriate resourcing of the NGO sector, including Catholic Social Services.

Catholic Social Service Agencies provide essential services to the community. During the Covid Pandemic and recent disasters, Catholic Social Services and our NGO partners demonstrated expertise, agility, and commitment, to stand up to the task serving and walking alongside the community directly 'at the coal face' in times of crisis.

We ask for bi-partisan agreement from the next NSW Parliament to build on this goodwill developed during the pandemic, to continue to value and celebrate the long-standing stewardship and commitment of the community sector. To appropriately resource and enable the sector to do it's work and by enhancing respectful, consultative, collaborative relationships, ensure longer contracts to enable better long term planning and by reducing administrative burdens and red tape.

Who we are:

Catholic Social Services NSW/ACT (CSS NSW/ACT) was established in 2018 by the network of Catholic social service agencies in NSW and ACT, primarily as an entity that could build capacity, share best practice and provide systemic advocacy on behalf of the network and for the vulnerable communities, families, and children, that agencies within the network serve.

Catholic social service agencies have had a long history as service providers in NSW and the ACT, serving individuals and communities for decades, since the first agencies were established in the late 1950's. CSS NSW/ACT draws on the experience of decades of Catholic Social Service provision and social policy development in New South Wales and the ACT. CSS NSW/ACT Inc envisages a fairer, more inclusive civil society and culture that embeds and supports the dignity, equality, and participation of all people.

As a state-wide advocate, CSS NSW/ACT also works with its members to produce evidence/research which informs public opinion and assists government and the community to develop just and compassionate social and economic policies that will improve the lives of the vulnerable and disadvantaged people in New South Wales and ACT.

CSS NSW/ACT also seeks to promote and increase awareness of the great work being done by Catholic Social Services within the Parishes and regions state-wide across NSW and the ACT.

The current membership of CSS NSW/ACT is 20 Catholic Social Services, based in NSW and ACT and includes the 12 Diocesan Agencies (i.e., CatholicCare and Centacare). Our members provide a broad range of services across NSW and ACT. In 2021, our network of members provided over \$550 million of Federal and State government funded programs, reaching over 190,000 people.

Collectively our members can be considered through a 'social services' lens, as a multimillion 'industry' with a great track record and reputation, in keeping with the mission to provide the quality services that people deserve. They also have valuable learnings, expertise, and local evidence-based knowledge to contribute.

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