

MEDIA RELEASE

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Not-for-Profit Sector Response to Outsourcing Government Community Services

The non-Government, not-for-profit community services sector in Western Australia is standing firm on its call for a 30% increase in Government funding, to ensure its staff are paid a fair and just wage and that quality community services are not compromised.

The Government must recognise, and give priority to, the community services sector, by increasing funding to ensure the continued delivery of quality community services to those experiencing disadvantage in the Western Australian community.

This response comes in light of the recent announcement that more Government services are likely to be outsourced to the non-Government sector, as part of the recommendations from the Economic Audit Committee Review.

Community Employers WA (CEWA), WACOSS and other peak bodies representing the not-for-profit sector have been in discussions with State Government in recent months, and have been reassured that they understand and appreciate the value and importance of the work carried out by community services sector staff and agencies.

Unfortunately, recent media reports suggest the driver for this recommendation seems to be based on the Government's need to reduce its financial deficit, and it sees the non-Government sector as a 'cheap' alternative.

Ms Sue Ash, CEO of WACOSS commented, "The non-Government community services sector does represent a valid, value for money alternative, and is qualified and experienced to deliver services. However, it cannot continue to provide these services, or indeed a number of new ones, when it is already under funded."

"Staff are already significantly underpaid. A senior social worker in Government is already paid 57%, or over \$29,000, more than their counterpart in the non government sector," commented Mr James Lawton, Executive Director of CEWA.

"The Government is relying on the extended goodwill and commitment of the sector's staff. However, this goodwill is already being severely tested. It is time the sector and its employers said enough is enough," continued Mr Lawton.

"We seek the Government's reassurance that any transition will also recognise the need to bridge the gap in current pay levels for our sector. It is time to recognise we are dealing with people, not just a budget," concluded Mr Lawton.

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