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FINANCIAL COUNSELLING CUTS - JOBS TO GO

Employers in the community services sector are renewing their call to the Premier of Western Australia to reconsider the proposed defunding of face to face financial counselling for many of the State's most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community, as they advise staff of coming redundancies.

Employers of the ~50 financial counsellors in Western Australia being defunded are now faced with the difficult task of determining redundancies in the coming weeks. The ensuing loss of highly skilled financial counsellors and their network of contacts and support throughout service providers, utilities, financiers and others, will not be easily replaced.

Employers represented by the WA Council of Social Service (WACOSS) and Community Employers WA (CEWA) are imploring the State Government to find a new alternative rather than cutting the services entirely.

“We urge the Government to maintain the longstanding commitment to working with the Community Services Sector in a collaborative and constructive manner, with the objective of understanding the needs of the community and how they can be met. The funding of Financial Counsellors is an important responsibility of Government and one that we cannot afford to neglect,” said CEWA Executive Director John Bouffler.

“While the Government may no longer think the services should be funded through the Department of Child Protection and Family Support, they remain a critical Government responsibility, and a new model for ensuring the sustainability of the services must be found,” said WACOSS CEO Irina Cattalini.

Members of CEWA and WACOSS have expressed significant concerns at the impending loss of financial counsellors and the impact this will have on critical services including housing and homelessness, domestic violence, emergency relief and welfare and relationship counselling. Numerous services are interconnected, and the financial stability of a client is one of the key lynchpins which help people suffering financial hardship in addressing the challenges they face. Financial Counselling is often seen as a preventative investment and studies have shown the long term savings made through these services.

Whilst the government has noted that there will be a few federally funded counsellors and a telephone helpline available, based on previous demand, they will not be sufficient to provide an appropriate level of support. Furthermore, there is concern that the change for many to a telephone service, will not be appropriate in addressing many of the complex needs and follow up consultations required to support people suffering financial hardship.

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Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS)

WACOSS is a peak membership based council of community service organisations and individuals. We advocate for social change to improve the wellbeing of Western Australians and to strengthen the community services sector that supports them.

Community Employers WA (CEWA)

CEWA is a registered Employer Organisation with the Industrial Relations Commission of Western Australia, and represents non-government, not-for-profit employers in the Community Services sector of Western Australia. CEWA has over 130 members comprising many of the largest and smaller Community Services Sector employers in WA, who in turn employ in excess of 10,000 staff and are supported by over 10,000 volunteers.
