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Rise

## **Giving vulnerable a voice**

While the temperature soars above 40°C and we are focussed on escaping the heat there is another preventable catastrophe that needs to be addressed by our leaders, namely Premier Mark McGowan and his Cabinet.

Western Australia's community services sector is in crisis and it is having a disastrous impact on people in our State. The organisations who support vulnerable and at-risk Western Australians including those escaping family and domestic violence, people experiencing homelessness, people with disability and those in our community who are living with mental health problems, are finding it increasingly difficult to survive amid the growing cost of providing services and alarmingly, the growing need.

For several years, members of the community sector in WA have been warning successive State Governments that non-government service providers are in peril and the lack of sustainable funding was pushing the entire sector to breaking point. Sadly, that day has come, and no one is getting any satisfaction from telling the current State Government that we are now at crisis point.

The solution is a simple one and that is to increase State funding for the community services sector by 20 per cent per in the next State Budget to make up for the systemic underfunding over almost eight years. Organisations have been expected to provide the same level and quality of services with relatively less funding. We cannot compromise on the quality of what we do, so have had to cut services and jobs in many cases. We need the State Government to be far more empathetic and put people in our State first by supporting the experts in providing care and services to those people who need it most to make WA a better community.

We can afford it. The Western Australian Department of Treasury is forecasting the State will receive more than \$6 billion in mining royalties in 2019/20 and yet, more than 240,000 Western Australians are living below the poverty line, and every day 20,000 WA children go to school without having breakfast.

More must be done to safeguard people in need. After all, a society is measured on how it treats its most vulnerable and right now many Western Australians who desperately need services are being turned away because community organisations are at capacity or worse, they are shutting their doors.

Premier McGowan has recently announced a \$150 million Housing Investment Package to build more than 500 new homes for those in most need and \$72 million for WA's first 10-year homelessness strategy and we applaud his government for addressing a critical issue in

Western Australia. However, the Premier's recent announcements do not address the ever-increasing funding shortage for those services that support vulnerable people in our State.

The nearly 100,000 community services sector workers have been forced to seek the support of the Western Australian voters in saying, enough is enough. We need services that are sustainably funded by government, so that the vulnerable people in our community can in turn be supported to lead good lives and be contributing citizens. It is incumbent on us all to send a message to the government that they must do better.

For more information visit [www.YourHelpWA.com.au](http://www.YourHelpWA.com.au) and support the sector's campaign.