

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT (PROHIBITING NO GROUNDS EVICTIONS) BILL 2024

Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Monday 29 July 2024

Question taken on Notice

The CHAIR: Given that you didn't ask Ms Sankovic a question, I'm going to quickly do that and ask specifically around the under-resourcing and the inferred discrimination that exists for communities in Western Sydney. I'm happy for you to take it on notice, but it'd be really great to know what you think are the necessary communication and resourcing elements that have to go around this legislative change to make sure that it is actually able to be used by people who may not have the ability to access AustLII and read the Residential Tenancies Act in full to be able to exercise their rights. I'm happy to hear a quick answer now, but if you want you can take on notice, what you think that resourcing needs to look like.

Response to Question taken on Notice:

Ms Billie Sankovic, Chief Executive Officer, Western Sydney Community Forum

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Service providers and community members across Western Sydney consistently, and over many years, report a lack of services to meet need.

Specifically, relating to the resourcing of tenancy advice and support services, Western Sydney Community Forum facilitated an innovative and collaborative model referred to as the Macarthur Real Estate Engagement project.

The project supported new and existing tenants of real estate agents in the private market to sustain tenancies using a collaborative approach within existing resources of the service system. The project evaluation showed that:

- for tenants, 57 tenancies were saved with more than a 70 percent success rate and that approximately 50 percent of these tenants had never been in contact with the service system; and

- for real estate agents, it was estimated \$56,000 was saved in not evicting tenants and up to \$1.1million was saved in potential future loss of earnings.

Despite the incredible success of this initiative, resourcing was not provided to sustain it in the Macarthur, nor to expand it to other high priority locations in Western Sydney. It subsequently relies on the willingness of individuals rather than establishing a systemic response that provides benefits for all stakeholders.

For further information please see report on the [Evaluation of the Macarthur Real Estate Engagement Project](#).

More generally, the Macarthur Real Estate Engagement project and other services that support tenancies and prevent no grounds evictions, rely on the existence of a local integrated service system.

Consultations with agencies indicate unequivocally that the state and capacity of the community sector in Western Sydney over the last several decades has been characterised by:

- inequitable funding and access to service,
- a fragmented and competitive service system,
- centralised models of service removed from community,
- spot based short term unsustainable funding which is not needs based or data driven, and
- a decline of integrated place-based models of service which are embedded in community.

The current situation reflects decades of designing and administering service policies, programs and funding based on market-based principles of competition – rather than on principles that deliver an equitable and sustainable universal baseline level of local service, which is enhanced and strengthened in response to local changing needs and priorities.

There are some important themes that have emerged that require deeper assessment and may apply uniquely to Western Sydney, including the following.

- Parachuting outsiders to increase or improve service delivery The concept of ‘parachuting’ refers to policies, programs and funding mechanisms at all levels of government, that actively facilitate the bringing in of new providers to deliver services where there is already an under-resourced embedded, capable, credible and legitimate service system in place.
- Erosion of place based integrated services due to a focus on survival. There is an increasing trend of sector agencies shifting their place-based service models, service objectives and/or service coverage to align with funding opportunities available through competitive processes. Actions for expansion or growth have

become commonplace in agency strategic plans or priorities. This applies equally to local providers and their peak agency structures.

- Short term funding for spot projects out of context. There are gross inequities in the level of service funding administered across local government areas. A local baseline level of service is missing in some areas. Short term grants for spot projects do not build on and strengthen baseline levels of service through additional funding and capacity. Further, the funding framework is not underpinned by a needs based and data driven service planning and funding approach that reflects gaps and priorities across communities and the service system. As a result, procuring and administering grants in and of itself takes precedence over developing and funding a strong and sustainable community services sector that is delivering locally and is universally accessible and equitable, particularly for communities who experience vulnerability and disadvantage such as those at risk of eviction.
- Centralised decision making removed from communities and context. There continues to be centralised decision making far removed from local communities and local service systems. This results in significant barriers to building a strong and sustainable service system through meaningful partnership which fosters innovation and collaboration.

It is recommended that the necessary resourcing elements that relate to legislative change ought to include:

- a commitment to a model that develops a baseline level of public services and supports universal, equitable and sustainable funding for local independent trusted place-based organisations who provide services with and for local communities,
- a Compact or Accord with the Community Sector, and with State and Local Governments to set a framework and principles for working collaboratively and respectfully to foster a strong, cohesive and sustainable universal service system,
- a needs and evidence based funding framework that incorporates genuine consultative processes with the Community Sector and facilitates alternate methods for providing recurrent foundational funding,
- a procurement policy that fosters funding approaches that build and strengthen the existing local service system capacity and capability and strengthens collaboration across and between agencies,
- streamlined procurement processes to support equity through universality of service and to direct limited resources to service delivery, and
- a commitment to the important role of peak organisations at the regional, state and national levels in facilitating collaborative Community Sector voices and

platforms that lead and shape policy and service delivery frameworks that meet community needs and priorities.

For further information please see [Western Sydney Community Forum's response to the Not for Profit Sector Development Blueprint Issues Paper.](#)