



POLICY PLATFORM 2023



ABOUT SECTOR CONNECT INCORPORATED

Sector Connect Incorporated (SC) is the peak organisation representing and providing regional leadership to community services in the South West Sydney Health District with a primary focus on Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly and Wingecarribee NSW. We have 23 years of experience as a regional leader, responsive to our region's changing needs as we identify priority areas for research and planning.

Our vision is for:

'the whole community working together for social, cultural and economic wellbeing'

Our mission is to lead in:

- strengthening the not-for-profit sector for effective service to the community,
- being a credible connected representative voice for the sector,
- building strategic relationships for influence and well informed advocacy for the region,
- facilitating partnerships for collaborative planning and efforts to impact key social issues and growth in the region

Our network consists of 'member' organisations, participants from the interagencies, forums and working parties we facilitate which includes community service organisation representatives, government representatives and other key stakeholders.

A VOICE FOR SOUTH WESTERN SYDNEY

This policy platform has been developed from consultation with our members, the South Western Sydney Leadership Network we facilitate and through our interagencies, auspices and working partnership groups.

It must be noted that we represent our region at State Peak consultations such as NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) and Local Community Service Association (LCSA), and support Families NSW (FAMs) & the NSW Child, Family & Community Aboriginal Corporation (AbSEC) and that the broader issues have been effectively voiced through their 2023 policy platforms. Whilst we endorse these policy platforms, our work aims to address unique regional issues. It also must be noted that there is inevitably some crossover; however, it is important to highlight what is most important to the local community sector to ensure they can meet the needs of their stakeholders, the residents of South Western Sydney.



BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

South Western Sydney, which includes the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Camden, Campbelltown, Canterbury/Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Wingecarribee and the Wollondilly, has experienced unprecedented population growth since the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011 Census. Calculating and averaging the ABS 2021 Census data, the combined regional population growth increase is 28.5%, with Camden LGA having had the most significant increase at 105.7%. By 2026, the increase from the 2011 Census will blow out to 42.7%, with Camden LGA seeing the highest growth at a whopping 156.5%. Furthermore, the South Western Sydney region is diverse, with people speaking another language other than English at home as high as 69.7% in Fairfield LGA and people identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander much higher than the Greater Sydney average of 1.7% in some LGAs, the Wollondilly LGA being the highest at 4.4%.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2021. Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id (informed decisions).

We present the figures this way because, excluding indexation payments, many funded social and community service programs have yet to receive an increase in funding despite this growth. In particular, we would like to highlight the Department of Community Service and Justice's Targeted Earlier Intervention Program, which funds local infrastructure such as neighbourhood and community centres providing community strengthening, family support, and parenting programs. Although reformed, our local services have not seen an

increase in this funding since 2010. As a result, they argue that with so little funds, they can only cover 'crises', which is hardly early intervention and prevention. Our respondents have also given us various examples of many other similar funding scenarios, some not even receiving indexation payments.

THE LOCAL PICTURE

Community Service organisations in our region report that they have seen a significant increase in people needing emergency relief, help to find affordable housing and crisis support. Our South Western Sydney Leadership Network has repeatedly reported that families have a higher level of complexity than in the past, which is more resource and time intensive. As the State Peaks have highlighted, the Risk Of Significant Harm reports rose by 13.5 % in NSW over three years in 2020-21. For Aboriginal children, over the five years to 2019-20, there was a 40% increase. Furthermore, waiting lists for allied health services and specialist services are lengthy. As a result, service managers feel uncomfortable with the level of risk they are carrying versus the resources, training and skills available to existing staff and those new to the industry. Staffing shortages exacerbate this. All but one organisation surveyed, reported they offer currently unfunded services due to service gaps, the most common being assisting young people in accessing the NDIS and assisting new arrivals.

The impact of COVID-19 and other recent disasters has also led to increases in mental health issues, domestic violence, housing insecurity and homelessness, and child safety and wellbeing concerns – with flow-through increases in demand for social services specialising in these areas. *Impact Economics and Policy (2022), Aftershock – Addressing the social and economic costs of the pandemic and natural disasters. Report Two - Domestic and Family Violence, Sydney*



The South Western Sydney Primary Health Network (SWSPHN) reported that funding for services for children's (under 12) mental health has not increased in line with funding increased for other areas of mental health, e.g. youth and adults. The SWSPHN commissioned mental health service for children - STAR4Kids, delivered by four providers across the SWS region, is experiencing high demand, with referrals in 2022 increasing by 38% compared to 2021 (*data provided by SWSPHN*). Furthermore, another large youth mental health provider told us, "1 in 4 Young People seem to present with undiagnosed Autism or intellectual disability. Around 50% of our total caseload is made out of young people presenting with ADHD".

Surveying revealed that 72% of services were frustrated with not being able to access or hire allied health staff, and 81% of services felt that they could not meet the demand for assistance for the 8–12-year cohort, with funding priorities favouring 0-5 years and youth

programs starting at either 11 or 12 years of age and up. One local youth service specialising in street work reported that "kids found on the street are getting much younger".

THE SOLUTION

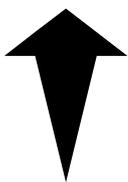
1. Increase funding to match population growth and need in South Western Sydney

- Increase funding by 30% to the targeted earlier intervention program to match population growth so services can do early intervention and prevention and less 'band-aiding'.
- Provide targeted intervention to children aged 8-12 years to reduce the stress on all local community service infrastructure in South Western Sydney services as they enter adolescence.
- Provide free interpreting services to 'all' government-funded services.
- Invest in local infrastructure, such as neighbourhood centres and similar services that act as access and distribution points for essential support, social connection and pathways to assistance during challenging times.

2. Increase training and skills in the South Western Sydney Community Service Sector

- Increase free training and initiatives that better equip services to meet the demands of the sector's changing landscape.
- Fund and support initiatives that allow new industry workers to be better equipped to work in a changing landscape.
- Initiatives to address the allied health shortage and staff shortages.

30% Funding Increase



Less 'band-aiding'



CONTACT TO DISCUSS FURTHER:

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