



Northern Territory Council of Social Service

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Battlers by-passed in budget – NTCOSS

The Northern Territory Government's 2010-11 budget offers little for those in our community who are struggling, or to the organisations supporting these vulnerable Territorians.

“This is a budget for people who already have jobs and prospects, rather than for those sleeping rough, struggling with alcohol problems, or living with a mental illness” said Wendy Morton, Executive Director of the Northern Territory Council of Social Service today.

“While NTCOSS welcomes the extra investment in public housing, and the piloting of public transport in regional and remote locations, we feel that opportunities have been missed.”

Chief Minister Paul Henderson has identified alcohol misuse as the biggest social problem confronting the NT, yet the government has failed to tackle the issue head on. “Characterising this complex community health issue as a law and order problem is missing the point.” said Ms Morton. “The government must direct more resources into prevention and rehabilitation.”

“We need a healthier, smarter Territory, as well as a safer Territory. The government must look beyond simplistic, punitive responses and really come to grips with the issue.”

This budget emphasises the provision of infrastructure over the provision of services. While it will encourage investment, it has failed to recognise the dire needs of those most at risk. Trickle-down economic policies won't help these people in the short term.

While the government has undertaken to restrict public service pay rises, it has made no provision for any increase in the salaries of community sector workers who earn much less than their counterparts in government and the private sector. Consequently, these organisations struggle to attract and retain staff with the capacity to provide quality services to those in our community who are most in need.

“The community sector has a key role to play in critical areas such as child protection, family support, and accommodation assistance, but they can't do this work effectively without adequate funding” concluded Ms Morton.

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