

## Services screaming for support

**It is the second-largest workforce in the state, yet the South Australian health and community services sector is increasingly under stress and forced to turn away thousands of our most vulnerable each year, new survey results reveal.**

The *Australian Community Sector Survey Report 2010* (ACSS), released today by the Australian Council of Social Service, reveals that vulnerable South Australians were turned away nearly 6,500 times in 2008-09 — up 19% from the previous year — from support services across a range of areas including child welfare, disability, domestic violence, legal and advocacy support, and health services.

Of people turned away, 45% were seeking financial and material support. 73% of respondents identified housing and homelessness, and financial and material support services, as being areas their clients needed but were not able to access.

“These figures indicate a sector that is stretched and unable to adequately support its own staff, let alone the disadvantaged and vulnerable South Australians they are there to help” said SACOSS Executive Director Ross Womersley.

“This sector employs 12.6% of South Australians — approximately 98,500 people — making it the second largest employing industry in SA. Mining, by comparison, employs just 1.2%. Between 1999 and 2009 its annual growth rate has been 3.5% and this trend is set to continue.” said Womersley.

The ACSS report reveals that as demand increases these same agencies report that their funding, provided by the government to deliver contracted services on its behalf, falls far short of covering costs.

“These survey results starkly reveal how organisations are crying out for reliable, ongoing funding that will enable them to plan and provide services to the most vulnerable in our community.” Said Womersley.

- In South Australia, agencies provided services on 132,222 occasions, a 6% increase from the previous year. Nationally, organisations recorded a 4% increase from last year’s service provision.
- The CPI increased by 4.5% in the survey period, but SA government funding to community sector organisations was indexed at only 2.6%. More than a third of respondents indicated that they received no indexation on their government funding, highlighting the inconsistent approach to indexing between departments even within the same government.
- 87% of respondents indicated that government funding does not cover the true cost of delivering contracted services.
- 77% of respondents indicated that their funding agreements did not allow them to plan adequately for their organisation’s future.
- Only 43% indicated that their state government funding was ongoing or recurrent.

Download the SA report : <http://www.sacoss.org.au/publications/index.html#papers>

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