
SACOSS Media Release

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SACOSS backs opportunity for early investment

The South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS) today welcomed announcements that tenders were being invited, in response to the State Government's newly revised guidelines for the Family and Community Development Program.

SACOSS Executive Director, Ross Womersley said: "This program is one of the few programs funded by government that specifically aims to help fund activities that strengthen some of our most vulnerable community members, before they get overwhelmed by major social problems."

Womersley went on to say: "Historically the non-government sector has valued this program highly, because it allows them to invest early in the lives of people who might otherwise go on to face very difficult challenges and social problems."

The Family and Community Development Program is aimed at helping young people, families with young children, people on low incomes along with neighbourhood and community centres to support local communities to develop into thriving and inclusive places. Activities that are designed in ways that ensure an otherwise vulnerable group of people are helped to grow and develop, to take more control of their lives and in the best of circumstances, to flourish.

Womersley said: "This is only a relatively small program but historically it has always over-delivered. It would be fantastic to see the government spending much more on early investment of this kind. In practice it is these programs that work to keep kids out of the child protection system, that keep young people out of the justice system, that help people move from being disengaged, to developing a sense of purpose and contribution, and that help neighbourhoods grow a real sense of community and belonging. This program works to build participation and join up our community in action together"

"There are so few examples where the State Government funds this type of early investment activity, and SACOSS strongly encourages the government to make much more funding available for these types of activities. It is a more efficient way of spending government funding. Without these types of investments, social issues can grow to a point that they become very costly to respond to.

Womersley said: "We know it costs our community – not just in dollar terms but in all sorts of other ways as well – when we don't get in early with help. For example, it costs a huge amount more to put kids into foster care than it does to provide the early assistance parents might need to help them become the best parents they can be. We know it costs so much more when we end up locking forgotten and disengaged young people away in youth detention, than it does to create a context where those young people remain engaged with a real sense of belonging in their homes and communities."

Womersley continued: “This is an area where the non-government sector has traditionally delivered innovative and highly efficient services. SACOSS encourage NGOs right across the state to take the opportunity to seek out these funds so they can continue making the fabulous contribution they do in their local community”

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