



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

A stronger, more diverse and independent community sector

Submission to the Department of Social Services

November 2023

Contents

Contents.....	1
1. Summary of recommendations	2
2. Introduction	3
3. Response to the DSS Issues Paper	3
3.1. Giving the sector the voice and respect it deserves through a meaningful working partnership.....	3
3.2. Providing grants that reflect the real cost of delivering quality services.	4
3.3. Providing longer grant agreement terms	9
3.4. Ensuring grant funding flows to a greater diversity of Community Service Organisations	10
3.5. Partnering with trusted community organisations with strong local links.....	10
4. Conclusion.....	11
5. About the St Vincent de Paul Society in NSW.....	11

1. Summary of recommendations

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW makes the following recommendations to the Australian Government to inform the Department of Social Services' community sector grant funding:

1. DSS shares more regular, open information with CSOs, particularly about funding, sector development opportunities and service quality, including through the DEX portal and online sector information sessions.
2. DSS recognise the expertise of the community sector by enabling CSOs to lead program design through commissioning for outcomes and funding CSOs to undertake research, planning and evaluation to inform program design with local communities.
3. DSS provide adequate funding to CSOs that includes provision for inflation and wage growth, covers indirect costs as well as direct costs of service provision, and funds disaster capabilities as part of business as usual.
4. DSS reviews its current program funding, particularly the Financial Crisis and Material Aid - Emergency Relief program, based on evidence about local population needs and the quantum and spread of current service provision, to better align CSO grants to adequately respond to local communities.
5. Separate to the Financial Crisis and Material Aid - Emergency Relief program, DSS should provide flexible funding to CSOs delivering programs aimed at intermediate to long-term change by commissioning for outcomes based on a human services framework, rather than funding prescribed service activities.
6. DSS funding agreements include provision for CSOs to roll-over unspent program funds at the end of each financial year.
7. DSS grant funding include adequate provision for CSO administrative and overhead costs, including management costs, planning, research, grant preparation and acquittal, capital infrastructure component and insurance cover.
8. DSS implement ACOSS recommendation for equitable, systemic and transparent indexation to all CSO grants and contracts that reflects the actual increase in costs incurred by funded organisations.
9. The Commonwealth work with state and territory governments to align CSO performance and reporting frameworks across all human service agencies.
10. DSS implement longer grant periods, of at least five years, with provision for periodic funding reviews built-in to ensure CSO funding remains fair and reasonable over the course of the grant.
11. DSS program funding provides CSOs with the flexibility to respond to emerging or changing population cohorts within the context of the program's objectives.
12. DSS program funding includes provision for research and evaluation to enable effective service delivery and innovation.

2. Introduction

St Vincent de Paul Society of NSW (the Society) makes this submission to the Australian Department of Social Services' (DSS) issues paper on a stronger, more diverse and independent community sector. We welcome the Commonwealth Government's commitment to reform operation of DSS grant funding to Community Sector Organisations (CSO) to better support Australian communities.

The Society is a large, long-term provider of the Financial Crisis and Material Aid - Emergency Relief (ER) program across NSW. We also deliver the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program through our North Coast Settlement Service and the Reconnect Youth program in Deniliquin. This submission is informed by the society's long history and experience delivering these funded programs in NSW for over two decades.

This submission complements, and is in addition to, the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council submission. We support the recommendations outlined in our National Council's submission in addition to those presented in this paper.

The Society's submission responds to the Issue Paper's five focus areas and provides comment on a selection of the discussion questions that are most pertinent to the Society and our experiences with DSS grant programs.

3. Response to the DSS Issues Paper

3.1. Giving the sector the voice and respect it deserves through a meaningful working partnership.

How can CSOs and government streamline the sharing of information, particularly through utilising technology to effectively engage, distribute, share, influence and inform in a timely and efficient manner?

For the sector and DSS to have a more meaningful working partnership, DSS should facilitate open and inclusive access to information about matters that directly impact funded CSOs, including partnership opportunities and service feedback.

The Society's experience is that information about DSS funding and sector development opportunities is not broadly shared with providers, nor is easily found out. Our services most frequently find out program and funding information through peak bodies or through sector forums and networks, rather than through DSS.

Our funded programs also identify that DSS does not provide information back to providers about service quality or impact. DSS only provides a yes/no response to the provider as to whether they have met their funding requirements. It also does not share examples of best practice from other funded programs to improve the delivery of other funded services or to enable them to connect.

DSS can foster more respectful working partnerships with CSOs by providing more regular, open and accessible information. For instance, the City of Sydney holds grant information sessions and one-to-one meetings for interested providers when new funding opportunities are available. This upfront information assists providers to better understand what the funder is seeking and to determine whether the funding opportunity is suitable for their organisation, prior to investing significant time and resources in developing a funding proposal.

Recommendation:

1. DSS shares more regular, open information with CSOs, particularly about funding, sector development opportunities and service quality, including through the DEX portal and online sector information sessions.

How can government ensure the community sector, including service users and those not able to access services, have an opportunity to contribute to program design without imposing significant burdens?

The Government can ensure the community sector and their service users contribute to program design by funding CSOs as backbone organisations to deliver place-based outcomes. As service providers, most CSOs have expertise and experience in program design. They can also facilitate the direct involvement of their clients and their communities in program design so that the programs are more appropriate and effective at meeting their needs and goals.

In such an approach, DSS would not lead program design but would rather initiate co-design of the program outcomes and corresponding performance indicators with the community sector and service users. DSS would provide flexible funding aligned with the desired outcomes to lead CSOs, and these organisations would undertake program design with relevant stakeholders, including service users, to achieve the agreed outcomes. This approach is discussed further in response to 3.2 below.

Recommendation:

2. DSS recognise the expertise of the community sector by enabling CSOs to lead program design through commissioning for outcomes and funding CSOs to undertake research, planning and evaluation to inform program design with local communities.

3.2. Providing grants that reflect the real cost of delivering quality services.

What would adequate and flexible funding look like?

Adequate and flexible funding for CSOs is funding to deliver outcomes and that is secure, takes into account rising costs associated with inflation and wage growth, and covers indirect costs as well as direct costs of service provision (see section below on administration and overheads).

For CSO funding to be adequate, and to support a commissioning approach where appropriate, it should be based on an evidence-informed understanding of state-wide and local population need. The Society is significantly underfunded for its provision of ER across the state. We are currently only funded to deliver services in 19 of the 28 SA4 areas across NSW, and the funding we receive for these areas falls well short of community need. In 2022-23, DSS funding only covered 22% of the Society's total ER direct client support across the state. Of the 19 DSS ER funded areas, DSS funding accounted for less than one-third (31%) of the Society's total ER expenditure in those areas.

DSS has granted the Society's around 24% less this financial year than the previous year (almost one quarter less), despite community need increasing. While the additional funding last year related to flooding in the North East of NSW, the need on the ground has still grown in 2023. The Society disbursed 20% more ER state-wide in the first quarter 2023-24 compared to the same quarter last financial year. Notably, the Society's first quarter expenditure within the 19 DSS funded SA4s has already surpassed our total DSS allocation for the entire year. This continued under-funding in the face of increasing community needs impacts the Society's sustainability and our potential social impact.

The Society is making a very significant own-contribution to the DSS Financial Crisis and Material Aid - Emergency Relief program, which last financial year equated to the Society funding 70% additional ER support above and beyond our DSS funding. We are increasingly seeing ER referrals to the Society

from other like agencies due to growing community need. Without the Society making this significant self-funded contribution to ER in NSW, thousands of people in crisis would be left without emergency support.

However, we have reached crisis point with unprecedented numbers of people seeking our support and a declining pool of funds. We can no longer assist all the people who come to us in need of food, meaning that people are going hungry. Because the Society has been drawing down on our own funds to meet the ER shortfall, we also no longer have the reserves to draw on in the event of another natural disaster. This means we will be less able to respond as we have in previous disasters, such as the 2022-23 flood and 2019-20 bushfires, when we were one of the first organisations to stand up in local communities.

As the Society faces increasing budgetary pressures on its service provision it , will have to make difficult decisions regarding our ongoing capacity to provide ER services in unfunded areas and to supplement services in under-funded areas.

The Commonwealth Government must look at how much the community sector is underfunded to meet people's immediate needs. If the government wants to achieve equitable wellbeing outcomes for communities, it should provide funding based on evidence about the location and quantum of community need. The Society is seeking to partner with DSS, including by sharing our ER data, to inform a more equitable, planned approach to these essential community programs.

With natural disasters becoming a more common occurrence across Australia, adequate funding should also be provided to CSOs so they can embed disaster capabilities as part of their business as usual. Flexible funding is also required for CSOs to pivot in the face of a natural disaster and meet immediate community needs. Funding flexibility would provide organisations with the ability to spend grant funds according to client needs and demand to achieve better outcomes, rather than dictating highly prescriptive funding parameters such as staffing.

In addition, funding flexibility would also allow CSOs to roll-over grant funds from one financial year to the next without funds being assumed by the government. Rolling-over funds would enable CSOs to deliver more effective client outcomes based on need, rather than incentivising organisations to expend any budget underspend without clear long-term benefits to clients.

Adequate, flexible funding for some programs can be facilitated by commissioning for outcomes based on a human services framework rather than funding prescribed service activities. An outcomes-based approach is appropriate for programs seeking to support people over a longer period of time to improve their wellbeing outcomes. However, it is not relevant to programs that deliver assistance to meet people's immediate needs in the short-term, such as the DSS Financial Crisis and Material Aid - Emergency Relief program.

Under an outcomes approach, CSOs would be rewarded for delivering on specified outcomes prescribed in the framework. The framework should be co-designed with the sector and service users, and outcomes should align to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Closing the Gap. To the extent possible, outcomes should align across Commonwealth and state jurisdictions to streamline the reporting requirements and reduce the administrative burden on CSOs.

The Society refers DSS to the NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework.¹ The Framework is an example of a cross-agency approach to drive population outcomes and improve client and community wellbeing. The Framework supports the government and community sector organisations to use an outcome-focused approach, based on a shared understanding of priorities.

CSO grant funding should include adequate provision for research and evaluation for CSOs to deliver quality services. There is currently very little discretionary funding available for CSOs to undertake

¹ NSW Department of Communities and Justice (2021) *What is the NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework?* (webpage, accessed 30/10/23), <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/human-services-outcomes-framework/what-is-the-nsw-human-services-outcomes-framework>

research to inform program design or to evaluate the effectiveness of program models and delivery. As DSS moves to outcomes-based commissioning, research and evaluation data will be essential to inform both successful implementation and ongoing program delivery under a commissioning approach. Research and evaluation data will also be required to test and learn from DSS new approaches to working, such as placed-based service delivery.

Recommendation:

3. DSS provide adequate funding to CSOs that includes provision for inflation and wage growth, covers indirect costs as well as direct costs of service provision, and funds disaster capabilities as part of business as usual.
4. DSS reviews its current program funding, particularly the Financial Crisis and Material Aid - Emergency Relief program, based on evidence about local population needs and the quantum and spread of current service provision, to better align CSO grants to adequately respond to local communities.
5. Separate to the Financial Crisis and Material Aid - Emergency Relief program, DSS should provide flexible funding to CSOs delivering programs aimed at intermediate to long-term change by commissioning for outcomes based on a human services framework, rather than funding prescribed service activities.
6. DSS funding agreements include provision for CSOs to roll-over unspent program funds at the end of each financial year.

What administrative and overhead costs are not being considered in current grant funding?

DSS grant funding does not support the cost of the Society's administrative or management overheads, which DSS identifies as discretionary activities instead of core enabling services. For instance, the Reconnect Program Operational Guidelines 2023 to 2026 explicitly state funds cannot be used for management costs or costs incurred with development of grant applications. Funding for related activities such as service planning, research or reporting are also not included as eligible expenditure.

The Society receives no administrative or overhead funding for ER with 100% of DSS funding allocated to client support. Other overhead costs not reflected in the DSS funding program include the rising cost of insurance cover and the capital infrastructure required in the form of administrative and client-facing premises to deliver programs. For instance, the Society currently delivers assistance, including the ER program, in over 375 locations across the state but we do not receive any direct funding through DSS for these physical sites.

The Society's experiences are reflected in the broader experiences of the sector as documented by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)² in their 2021 survey of the community sector which identified, '...the administration, management and infrastructure necessary for efficient, reliable and sustainable service delivery are frequently not allowed as costs in funding contracts.'³

Recommendation:

² Blaxland, M and Cortis, N (2021) *Valuing Australia's community sector: Better contracting for capacity, sustainability and impact*. Sydney: ACOSS, https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ACSS-2021_better-contracting-report.pdf

³ Blaxland, M and Cortis, N (2021) *Valuing Australia's community sector: Better contracting for capacity, sustainability and impact*. Sydney: ACOSS, https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ACSS-2021_better-contracting-report.pdf

7. DSS grant funding include adequate provision for CSO administrative and overhead costs, including management costs, planning, research, grant preparation and acquittal, capital infrastructure component and insurance cover.

How are rising operational costs impacting the delivery of community services?

Research by the Centre for Social Impact, Philanthropy Australia and Social Ventures Australia shows that indirect costs such as IT, finance and HR comprise more than one-third (33%) of the total cost of running a not-for-profit enterprise.⁴ Given the lack of government funding to meet these costs of delivering community services and programs, less funding is available for client support such as flexible brokerage responses to individual need or to fund extras such as food or medicine.

While larger organisations such as the Society have the reserves to absorb some of these costs, smaller organisations generally do not have the financial resources to cover non-funded costs, and consequently many are struggling to remain financially viable or have already exited the market.

The Settlement Council of Australia recently noted that due to the Commonwealth government's inadequate funding of wages growth, almost all SETS providers (91%) have had their funding reduced, and more than four-fifths (87%) have reduced staffing levels or indicated that their workforce would reduce if wage supplementation funding was not reinstated. One settlement service has already been forced to shut its doors, and others have flagged serious sustainability risks.⁵

The same research also found that CSOs are under-investing in critical capabilities due to a belief that funders will not cover the full cost of impact. This is then creating a 'cycle of starvation' whereby funders have an inaccurate expectation of the costs necessary to achieve and assess social impact.⁶

The inadequate funding for the cost of services, coupled with the prescriptive funding and operational guidelines, also constrains providers ability to implement innovative ways of working and delivering service. This limits the effectiveness and potential impact of programs to improve service users' and communities' wellbeing outcomes.

What have been your experiences with, and reflections on, the supplementation and change to indexation?

The Society's experience is that indexation across DSS and other Commonwealth funded programs is not adequately nor regularly adjusted relative to inflation and wages growth. The Society's SETS program grant recently received a one-off adjustment of 1% for wages, which was well short of the award increases and does not include inflation. This long-term and compounding underfunding makes it difficult for services to maintain existing service provision levels, to recruit and retain staff, and to plan and invest in the future capacity of the organisation.

The Society's experience with DSS indexation and the ensuring impact of inadequate funding on service provision is shared across the community sector. ACOSS 2023 community sector survey found, "As government did not fully cover the increases in costs faced by organisations, some

⁴ Centre for Social Impact, Philanthropy Australia and Social Ventures Australia (2022) *Paying What It Takes*, <https://www.csi.edu.au/research/paying-what-it-takes-funding-indirect-costs-to-create-long-term-impact/>

⁵ Settlement Council of Australia (2023) *Media Release: 2023/24 Federal Budget neglects overwhelmed and underfunded settlement sector*, <https://scoa.org.au/media-release-2023-24-federal-budget-neglects-overwhelmed-and-underfunded-settlement-sector/#:~:text=A%20recent%20consultation%20with%20SETS,if%20funding%20was%20not%20reinstated.>

⁶ Centre for Social Impact, Philanthropy Australia and Social Ventures Australia (2022) *Paying What It Takes*, <https://www.csi.edu.au/research/paying-what-it-takes-funding-indirect-costs-to-create-long-term-impact/>

needed to reduce staff or staff hours, or cut back on service delivery... funding had not kept pace with increases in wages and rising cost of service delivery...'.⁷

The Society supports ACOSS's recommendations for a transparent, systemic and consistent approach to indexation across all government-funded human services that reflects the actual increase in costs incurred by CSOs. ACOSS recommended the Federal Government, "Apply equitable and transparent indexation to all grants and contracts for community sector organisations, that reflects the actual increase in costs incurred by funded organisations. Ensure providers are notified in a timely manner and rates are published annually."⁸ It also recommended that the government guarantee necessary funding for pay decisions made by the Fair Work Commission affecting the community sector.⁹

We refer DSS to the South Australian government's approach to indexation that serves as a model for the Commonwealth and other states. Mandatory indexation applies to all multi-year funding agreements between the government and CSOs providing human services. Indexation rates are published four years in advance, providing organisations with much needed funding certainty. Supplementary funding is applied when required to address higher service delivery costs associated with minimum Award outcomes and inflation pressures.¹⁰

Funding consistent indexation that keeps pace with the rising costs of running an organisation will provide greater certainty to CSOs, support the more efficient delivery of programs and services each year, and deliver greater stability for people working in the sector. Most importantly, adequate, transparent and consistent indexation will enable CSOs to better provide vital services to those most in need.

Recommendation:

8. DSS implement ACOSS recommendation for equitable, systemic and transparent indexation to all CSO grants and contracts that reflects the actual increase in costs incurred by funded organisations.

How can government streamline reporting requirements, including across multiple grants, to reduce administrative burden on CSOs?

DSS can streamline reporting requirements by aligning commonwealth agencies and states performance and reporting frameworks. As DSS moves to implement outcomes-based commissioning for some programs as appropriate, it should align its outcomes with existing state and territory outcomes frameworks and performance indicators based on a shared understanding of what works to improve client and community outcomes. This integration should be both vertically across jurisdictions as well as horizontally across human services agencies, including the Department of Health.

Recommendation:

9. The Commonwealth work with state and territory governments to align CSO performance and reporting frameworks across all human service agencies.

⁷ Australian Council of Social Service (2023) *At the precipice: Australia's community sector through the cost of living crisis*, <https://www.acoss.org.au/acss-april-2023/>

⁸ Australian Council of Social Service (2023) *At the precipice: Australia's community sector through the cost of living crisis*, p8. <https://www.acoss.org.au/acss-april-2023/>

⁹ Australian Council of Social Service (2023) *At the precipice: Australia's community sector through the cost of living crisis*, <https://www.acoss.org.au/acss-april-2023/>

¹⁰ Department of Treasury and Finance, *Indexation*, webpage, Government of South Australia, <https://www.treasury.sa.gov.au/Ourservices/not-for-profit-sector-funding-and-contracting/indexation>.

3.3. Providing longer grant agreement terms

What length grant agreements are CSOs seeking to provide certainty and stability for ongoing service delivery?

The Society supports longer grant agreements of five years or more to facilitate longer-term planning, reduce the costs associated with frequent re-tendering processes, and provide more certainty and stability to the sector. However, longer-term grants should be accompanied by fair and reasonable funding over the life of the contract that is proportionate to the increased risk borne by CSOs. Longer grant agreements should include provision for a periodic review of grant indexation to account for changes in inflation, wages growth, and other service delivery costs.

Recommendation:

10. DSS implement longer grant periods, of at least five years, with provision for periodic funding reviews built-in to ensure CSO funding remains fair and reasonable over the course of the grant.

What funding flexibility do CSOs require to enable service delivery and innovation?

A prerequisite for CSOs to provide services and innovate is adequate baseline funding that reflects the true costs of service delivery and that is proportionate to community need. As noted in response to focus area two, this baseline funding should include adequate provision for research and evaluation to allow CSOs to test new program delivery approaches, learn from what works and what doesn't, and to re-direct funding accordingly. It should also provide CSOs with the flexibility to respond to emerging needs or changing population cohorts.

CSOs also require more flexible funding in how grants are used and acquitted that permits them to re-purpose funding towards more effective and innovative programs. Current funding approaches do not permit CSOs to re-purpose and re-align their funding to more effective, evidence-based services or to meet the changing environment and needs of the community during a funding period.

For instance, the Society's North Coast Settlement Service has provided unfunded support for several years to meet the needs of an emerging client cohort that was not included in the original funding agreement. Opportunities to review and re-negotiate grant agreements need to be built-in to accommodate emerging needs and innovate service models. ACROSS identified the need for this flexibility across the community sector in its 2021 contracting report.¹¹ This rigidity in the current grants system could be overcome through a commissioning for outcomes approach discussed above in section 3.2.

Recommendation:

11. DSS program funding provides CSOs with the flexibility to respond to emerging or changing population cohorts within the context of the program's objectives.
12. DSS program funding includes provision for research and evaluation to enable effective service delivery and innovation.

¹¹ Blaxland, M and Cortis, N (2021) *Valuing Australia's community sector: Better contracting for capacity, sustainability and impact*. Sydney: ACROSS, https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ACSS-2021_better-contracting-report.pdf

What flexibility is required by CSOs in acquittal processes to support and encourage sector innovation?

The DSS grant acquittal process needs to be streamlined to support greater efficiency and encourage sector innovation. The current acquittal process requires CSOs to produce highly detailed, granular reports on service activity and outputs. This process and microlevel reporting is not aligned with, or conducive to, an outcomes based approach. As DSS moves to commissioning for outcomes for some programs, it should introduce a grant acquittal process reflective of this higher order approach and that reduces unnecessarily onerous reporting requirements on funded CSOs.

3.4. Ensuring grant funding flows to a greater diversity of Community Service Organisations

How could larger CSOs support smaller CSOs? What are the barriers to providing this support?

Larger CSOs, such as the Society, can support smaller CSOs through partnerships to achieve greater scale and impact. This includes through preparing joint funding applications, sharing tools and processes to inform accreditation and quality auditing, providing enabling functions for smaller CSOs, and sharing resources such as staff or premises. For instance, the Vinnies Youth Community Centre (VYCC) in Brookvale provides free rent to ONE MEAL Co-Op, which provides healthy, nutritious food relief support for people experience poverty or disadvantage in the local community.

Many larger CSOs also have the capacity to support the work of CSOs in local communities by becoming a backbone organisation leading collective impact and place-based approaches. However, a barrier to larger CSOs providing this support to smaller organisations is the lack of dedicated funding for the time and resources involved. For effective capacity-building and partnerships between CSOs, this support and collaboration needs to be adequately funded.

3.5. Partnering with trusted community organisations with strong local links

What is your experience with and reflections on place-based funding approaches?

The Society recognises the potential benefits of place-based approaches to deliver more effective and sustainable outcomes for people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, local communities, and both larger and smaller CSOs. Place-based funding enable communities to access and use funding to meet their local needs and aspirations in a more integrated, holistic manner, while also strengthening community capacities through participation in program governance and decision-making about funding allocations. Place-based funding can also strengthen small local CSOs through auspicing or partnership arrangements with larger CSOs, whose involvement may be time limited.

The Society has identified the implementation of place-based approaches as a priority initiative under our new Strategic Plan 2024-28 to deliver more and better outcomes for the most disadvantaged communities in NSW. The Society's approach to place-based work is a collaborative community development approach to build thriving communities, by partnering with community members to design local solutions and guide action.¹² The core elements of our place-based approaches include:

- A focus on the unique situation of a particular place,
- Local people included in decision-making, and

¹² Strengthening Communities Alliance (2023). Strengthening communities position paper.

- Strategies tailored to the community's needs, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.¹³

Based on this approach, the Society has commenced the establishment of a place-based pilot at our Nagle Centre in Campbelltown. While this work is still in its inception, we anticipate the rollout of place-based approaches will enable the Society to increase our impact by sharing resources and collaborating with local communities to achieve better outcomes.

Where there is a community-led change initiative, could shared accountability to community and funders (government) strengthen service delivery?

Shared accountability could strength outcomes by ensuring there is equal vested interest in achieving positive outcomes; however, consideration would need to be given to the potential for unintended consequences of shared accountability, such as blame-shifting and increased reporting complexity on CSOs, and how any adverse consequences could be mitigated.

4. Conclusion

The Society thanks the Australian Government for the opportunity to input to the consultation on a stronger, more diverse and independent community sector. The community sector makes a significant contribution to the health and wellbeing of the Australian community, in particular to improving outcomes for people experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

This contribution must be supported and strengthened through adequate, flexible funding to CSOs to deliver more equitable outcomes for people and communities. The Society welcomes further opportunities to contribute to reform of DSS grant funding programs to deliver a stronger, more diverse and independent community sector in Australia.

For further information about this submission, contact:

Solange Frost
Manager Policy and Advocacy
St Vincent de Paul Society of NSW
Solange.frost@vinnies.org.au

5. About the St Vincent de Paul Society in NSW

In 1833 in Paris, 20-year-old student Frederic Ozanam resolved to do what he could to bear witness to his Christian upbringing by assisting those less fortunate in the community. Together with a group of friends, he sought the advice of Sr Rosalie Rendu, who guided their approach towards one that affirms the dignity of each human being and invites a deep relationship of solidarity.

Declaring that no form of charity would be foreign to their work, the first 'Conference of Charity' has since grown into a worldwide movement that continues to seek out and address poverty in all its forms.

In NSW, the Society was established over 140 years ago. It now has over 3,500 members who offer material and financial assistance to people in their communities as well as companionship and social support. Members of the Society who visit people who need help in their homes, refer those at risk to our services, where we offer case management, support services, and referral to other agencies

¹³ Department of Social Services (2023). [National Centre for Place-Based Collaboration \(Nexus Centre\)](#)

to help keep people at home. Specialist responses are provided for women and children wishing to leave family and domestic violence while retaining existing housing.

Professional services have been established in response to the needs of people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, people with disability, people seeking support in relation to alcohol and other drug use, and people experiencing other forms of exclusion. In 2022-2023, our 26 housing and homelessness services supported more than 9,000 people, a 5% increase on the previous year. Overall, we provided \$13.4 million of assistance in NSW an increase of nearly 60% on the previous financial year.

Through our community housing provider, Amélie Housing, we provide social and affordable housing with tailored support to meet the needs of the growing number of people locked out of the private rental market. Amélie Housing manages approximately 1,400 dwellings in NSW.

We are inspired to create a more just and compassionate society and to offer a 'hand-up' to people experiencing the most disadvantage. We respect their dignity and encourage them to take control of their own destiny.