



‘Drug Summit consensus was clear – we need the NSW Government to implement its recommendations’

A Joint Statement from leading NSW social service organisations

We fundamentally believe in the wholeness, inherent worth and dignity of every human being.

We want a society with systems and laws defined by fairness, compassion, dignity and hope.

Every day, our organisations confront inequality and injustice.

We provide holistic, integrated services to children, young people, families, those living in poverty and experiencing homelessness and the elderly. Together we serve hundreds of thousands of people across NSW.

We also work every day with people who use drugs and experience drug dependency.

Our organisations participated in the NSW Drug Summit, and we welcomed the report released last month. This presents a strong blueprint for change and reform that will save lives and help keep people safe.

The Report has a number of priority actions which include greater investment in treatment and harm reduction services so that people can access a range of supports when and where they need them.

It also recommends reforms and expansion of existing diversion initiatives so that more people feel safe to ask for the help they need and have dignifying, evidence-based and health-focused responses to their substance use and dependency.

We had hoped that the recent NSW Budget would have allocated funding to implement the recommendations of the NSW Drug Summit Report, including new funding for much-needed alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services. Whilst we welcome funding for the Dubbo Alcohol and Other Drug Residential Rehabilitation Centre, much more is needed to address the gaps in treatment across NSW so that life-saving supports for people are available when they seek them.

By implementing the priority actions outlined in NSW Drug Summit report with urgency, increasing funding for urgently needed services and making sensible changes to our laws, we can help keep the people we serve and our communities safe.

As social service and faith-based organisations, we urge the NSW Government to demonstrate leadership and respond promptly and appropriately to the findings of this report. The families and communities impacted by this issue across NSW have waited too long for change.

We see the ongoing impact that stigma has on people who use drugs and experience drug dependency and the difficulty in accessing support.

We see an overdose rate that continues to climb across the state and systems and policies that disproportionately harm the most vulnerable in the community.

We are driven by our shared experiences on the frontline, and the stories and experiences of the people we serve. We are committed to increasing partnerships with individuals who have lived and living experience and their families to collaboratively develop effective solutions.

We are inspired by our shared values to make this statement as we await the Government’s response and plan for implementation of the recommendations of the [NSW Drug Summit Report](#).

**Signed:**

Uniting NSW.ACT

The Salvation Army

Wesley Mission

St Vincent De Paul Society NSW

Wayside Chapel

NCOSS

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Quotes

"The Drug Summit and the over 450 delegates representing a cross section of community voices, people with lived/living experience, police, health experts, legal services, NGO's and the AOD sector, and the 3600 responses to the NSW governments online Have Your Say survey is the Government's mandate for action and change.

"The families and friends of those impacted by our unfair drug laws and communities across NSW have waited too long for change. We all want the people we love to be safe. Reform is needed now." **Emma Maiden, Director of Advocacy and External Relations, Uniting NSW.ACT**

"We look forward to the NSW Government's response to the Drug Summit report. We welcome the opportunity to be part of a sector response and walk alongside the NSW Government to ensure that our critical services are appropriately resourced to meet the growing need present across the state and that people are able to access support free from stigma."

Yolanda Saiz, CEO, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

"The Drug Summit revealed a clear need to focus on prevention and early intervention, cultural safety for First Nations communities, holistic supports across the community and a whole-of-government approach to drug reform. It is critical that the NSW Government swiftly commits to implementing these priorities through genuine partnership with impacted communities and the NGO sector, along with adequate funding for our under-resourced frontline service providers which are hanging on by a thread.

NCOSS looks forward to working with the NSW Government to deliver holistic and compassionate solutions that put people at the heart of our approach to harm minimisation."

Cara Varian, CEO, NSW Council of Social Service

A quarter century on from the first ever NSW Drug Summit we have a new opportunity to sensibly reshape our laws and policies to focus on supporting people not pathologising and punishing. The priority recommendations put forth in the report will save lives, and anything that keeps me from doing another pre-mature funeral for a member of our community is worthwhile."

Rev. Jon Owen, Pastor and CEO, Wayside Chapel

"We're deeply disappointed that this Budget fails to invest in alcohol and other drug treatment — especially when demand is rising and lives are on the line. Without action, the system stays stretched and people keep falling through the cracks." **Andy Biddle, State Manager, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services - NSW/ACT, The Salvation Army**

"The NSW Government drug summit presents a vital opportunity to address the complex challenges of substance use and addiction in our communities. Wesley Mission urges the Government to consider innovative solutions and deliver evidence-based strategies that prioritise health and harm reduction, while ensuring community safety."

Rev Stu Cameron, CEO, Wesley Mission