

MEDIA RELEASE

Some State Budget positives, but more needed

Northern Rivers Social Development Council has welcomed today's NSW Budget announcements on new funding for neighbourhood centres, disability services, housing and youth training initiatives but expressed disappointment at the lack of spending on key priorities for the region.

According to NRSDC President, Tony Dreise, new funding for community initiatives is long overdue.

'The budget includes an additional \$10 Million per year across NSW in new funding for vital community strengthening services such as neighbourhood centres. These services play a vital role in communities across the region, and have operated on a shoe-string for years,' Mr Dreise said. 'We have been arguing for more funding for these services and are delighted that the government has finally acted.'

'NRSDC also welcomes spending on disability services, homelessness and social housing,' Mr Dreise said. 'While much of this funding had already been announced we are glad to see the government honouring these commitments.'

'But there are some major gaps,' said Mr Dreise.

'We are very disappointed that there is very little new funding for public dental health services. There will be record spending on healthcare this year, but nothing has been set aside to deal with the massive waiting list for public dental services. The NSW Health Department's own statistics show that children in our Region have the worst dental health in NSW, and we need real investment to fix this. What we need is better preventative dental health care and faster access to emergency public dental care,' Mr Dreise said.

'Public transport is another area where we have been ignored. Funding has been allocated for Sydney's metropolitan transport plan but there is nothing for the Regions. Fares for people in our region are often double what people in Sydney pay to travel similar distances. What we would have liked to see is funding to develop more passenger transport options for our region and a more equitable approach to fares. The State Plan commits the Government to providing a fair, accessible and sustainable public transport system, but this budget does not deliver for the regions,' said Mr Dreise.

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