

Jan Barham MLC & Dr Mehreen Faruqi MLC

Parliament House, Macquarie St, Sydney NSW 2000



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MEDIA RELEASE

Greens raise concerns about Government approach to community services delivery and funding

The State Delegates' Council of the Greens NSW has called on the NSW Government to review and improve its approach to resourcing and delivering vital community services for vulnerable people, including children at risk and women in need of refuge.

Jan Barham, Greens NSW spokesperson on Family and Community Services, Disability Services, Ageing and Housing, said:

“The Greens are concerned that the Government has not committed to key recommendations of the recent inquiry into outsourcing community service delivery. Given the widespread concern we’ve seen following the recent tender outcomes for homelessness services, it’s essential that the Government takes responsibility for ensuring the quality and availability of services.

“The Government’s refusal to ensure it will act as a provider of last resort leaves vulnerable people at risk when non-government services are unavailable or unsuitable. I also note that the Government is considering whether to enhance the Auditor-General’s role in evaluating the performance of non-government social services that receive public funding,” Ms Barham said.

Dr Mehreen Faruqi, Greens NSW spokesperson for Women, said:

“This ‘one size fits all’ approach that the Government has taken to domestic violence and homelessness is counterproductive and dangerous.

“Women-only services like the Muslim Women’s Support Centre, Immigrant Women’s Speakout and the Lillian Howell Project have, for decades, provided high quality specialist services where women work with women to keep them safe from violence and provide counselling and resources that can help prevent violence from occurring again.

“Women-only refuges across the state are facing closure or being handed over to generalist service providers resulting in the loss of long serving and dedicated staff. The collective expertise that these staff have in working with women at risk and their families is a devastating loss to our community.

“The Government must provide long term funding to women-only specialist services and reverse the decisions of this flawed “Going Home Staying Home” program,” Dr Faruqi concluded.

For Further Comment:

Jan Barham: 0447 853 891
Mehreen Faruqi: 0419 142 200 | 9230 2625

Statement adopted by the Greens NSW State Delegates' Council, Sunday 17 August 2014:

The Greens NSW at their State Delegates' Council in Hornsby in August 2014 expressed grave concerns about:

- i. the NSW Government's response to the Parliamentary inquiry into Outsourcing Community Services Delivery's final report, particularly their refusal to guarantee that the Government would act as a "provider of last resort" in human services delivery when non-government service providers are unable to address people's needs, and their lack of commitment to ensuring adequate Government responsibility and public accountability for promoting the safety, welfare and wellbeing of vulnerable people; and
- ii. the NSW Government's flawed competitive tendering approach to non-government services, including the Going Home Staying Home homelessness packages which have provoked widespread dismay at the loss of localised, experienced specialist women's refuges and other services, and which have caused upheaval for organisations, staff and communities based on a process that emphasised minimising costs over recognising the importance of local connections and experienced support services.

The Greens NSW call on the NSW Government to:

- i. ensure that all government departments and agencies involved in human services are adequately funded and staffed to deliver on their service responsibilities to the whole population in need, including increasing child protection caseworker numbers to allow Community Services to protect children who may be at risk of significant harm and ensure the welfare of the state's most vulnerable children and young people;
- ii. increase investment in prevention and early intervention services across all areas of Family and Community Services, including programmes for families at risk of child abuse and neglect, for people at risk of homelessness, and to address the alarming over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child protection system; and
- iii. urgently review the funding needs of specialist services including women's refuges that are at risk of closure through the Going Home Staying Home reforms and ensure continuity of vital services.

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