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MEDIA RELEASE



NSW Government diverts extra DV worker funds to boost Aboriginal Controlled Organisations' capacity

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes has been told by the NSW government it cannot compete for funds where it delivers DV services in the New Specialist – Family Domestic and Sexual Violence Workers tender because priority has been given to Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

This illogical decision will disadvantage women seeking assistance to flee DV.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes operates across 52% of NSW in Western and Far West NSW in places like Bourke, Cobar, Condobolin, and Wilcannia. The organisation is the main DV service provider in Forbes and Bourke and manages the women's refuges in both towns.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes chief executive officer Anne-Marie Mioche says the government's approach is concerning.

"There are 148 positions in total, and 23 in our areas we should have been allowed to compete for, and the government is only allowing us to apply for two positions," she said.

"Those two positions are in Cobar and Warren, and it feels like that is only because they could not find an ACCO to fill those jobs.

"Our service is really stretched especially in Forbes, Parkes and Condobolin where we have just renovated a convent that could house multiple women with children but we only have a part-time worker.

"I don't know how we will manage. Our Forbes-Parkes service has for years provided services to twice as many women and children as we are funded to do, so this decision is a kick in the gut.

"We understand the government's wish to boost the capacity of ACCOs and have no issue with the government pursuing this agenda, but this money was meant to be for organisations to get extra DV workers and that agenda has been diverted so they can boost the ACCOs workforce, not the general DV workforce."

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes has been operating for almost three decades, delivering positive outcomes for communities.

Ms Mioche said the rules for this tender – which closes on Friday – also created uncertainty for the future.

"I am worried the new \$230 million package announced yesterday will go the same way and we will be prevented from competing for funds in the future as well," Ms Mioche said.

"One of the priority areas for the NSW government is to get more Aboriginal workers in DV, which is appropriate in the regional and remote areas where we work.

"However, we already do this – for example in Forbes 43% of our team members and 44% of our clients identify as Aboriginal.

"In places like Bourke, in some of our programs 100% of our team members are Aboriginal. We cater to everyone in the community and have done this for years.

"It is very clear that the government's agenda is to boost ACCO workforce capacity at the cost of DV organisations such as ours – never mind that we have been struggling on a shoestring budget for years and this money was intended to give us relief.

“To add insult to injury the government seems to have gone out of its way to knock us out of the competition, telling us we could compete in places such as the Snowy Valley LGA and the Warrumbungle. That’s hundreds of kilometres from our nearest offices.

“I enquired as to whether they had made a mistake and they insist we were offered the Snowy Valley after a ‘geographical analysis’.

“It is joke – the Snowy Valley is 900 kilometres from Bourke!

“They fund us, so they know exactly where we operate so this smells like dirty tricks.

“I am very worried about the future funding – will we continue to be barred from applying so the government can fulfill its agenda?

“Competition is healthy and it is clear the government will stop at nothing to stop high-performing organisations such as ours competing for funds.

“This is at the cost of women seeking assistance to escape domestic violence, so they should be ashamed and leads me to question how serious they are about cracking down on DV.”

Ends.....

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes provides social services, caring for the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

We respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging



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