



Financial counselling funding cut to cause service chaos in western NSW

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes (CCWF) will lose 41 per cent of its Financial Counselling and Financial Capability funding in the Far West and Orana region in an inexplicable decision by a federal government department.

CCWF chief executive officer Anne-Marie Mioche warns the funding cut will adversely affect vulnerable people in some of the most remote communities in NSW.

The organisation is seeking an urgent meeting with Minister for Social Services Tanya Plibersek.

“The decision is a real shock especially given the feedback we’ve had is that our service, which we have been delivering since 2009, is outstanding,” Ms Mioche said.

“We have consistently been praised by funders and communities for our innovative model that ensures people receive timely, high-quality support, even in the most remote locations.”

The tender outcomes awarded CCWF an unchanged level of funding for the Central West region, but less than 40 per cent of the funding available for the Far West and Orana, despite the organisation being the predominant provider in that region.

The funding decision will lead to major disruption in the provision of vital financial counselling across more than 22 communities in the vast Far West and Orana.

A service in demand, in the past financial year alone, CCWF provided financial counselling to 710 clients, 36 per cent of whom identified as Aboriginal, a critical indicator of the organisation’s reach and trust in communities where support is often hard to access.

“Our coverage across rural and remote NSW is unmatched,” Ms Mioche said.

“Wilcannia, Condobolin, Cobar, Nyngan and Bourke are among our 15 branch locations.

“We’re deeply embedded in these communities and our services are community-designed, which is exactly the kind of delivery model the government says it wants.”

Having had its financial counselling service gutted in the core Far West and Orana location, CCWF has been awarded funding for the Murray region, requiring it to expand to a new location with a significantly reduced overall budget and foundation.

“The decision to give us a new region but defund us where we’re already well established defies logic,” Ms Mioche said.

“I’ve spoken with other services affected by this decision, and they are just as dismayed.

“It does not make any sense.”

The funding cut comes after a nine-month wait for the tender outcome, leaving just eight weeks for CCWF to work through the impact on jobs and service transition.

“This isn’t just a contest about funding – this program is already severely underfunded with no increase in funding over the past decade,” Ms Mioche said.

“It is about poor decision making that will cause service chaos in areas where support is stretched so thin.”

While CCWF welcomes new providers to meet growing demand, Ms Mioche says new providers will take time to establish and recruit, meaning little to no service improvement for clients in the short term.

“We urge the Commonwealth Government to review this decision and engage with us to find a sustainable solution that protects frontline services and ensures vulnerable Australians are not left behind,” Ms Mioche said.

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Supporting individuals, families and communities in western NSW