
From: Angela Van Dyke
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:06 AM
To: Office of Abigail Boyd

Subject: Request to Correct Record
Importance: High

Good afternoon Ms Boyd and Committee members,

Attached to this email is correspondence and supporting documentation, to **correct the record** on statements made by the Member for Kellyville, Ray Williams, MP to the **Inquiry on Integrity, Efficacy and Value for Money of the Local Small Commitments Allocation**.

Our service was not informed that Mr Williams had implicated us in his allegations. We are concerned about the possible consequences of his statements to the hearing on 14 February 2025, and would like to have the record publicly corrected.

Please feel free to contact me if you require further information.

Kind regards

Angela Van Dyke – Chief Executive Officer
Blacktown City- Woman of the Year 2024



Supporting
International Women's Day
March 8 2025

 #IWD2025
#AccelerateAction



NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.

9 Park Street, Riverstone NSW 2765
Ph: 9627 3622 www.nwcs.org.au



I WOULD LIKE TO PAY MY RESPECT AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THE LAND ON WHICH I WORK AND LIVE, AND ALSO PAY RESPECT TO ELDERS BOTH PAST AND PRESENT.



9 Park Street, PO Box 418 Riverstone NSW 2765
Phone: (02) 9627 3622 Fax: (02) 9627 3225 www.nwcs.org.au

To everyone on committee cc into email

Abigail Boyd, MLC
Parliamentary Chair
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Boyd

RE: Parliamentary Inquiry into the Integrity, Efficacy and Value for Money of the
Local Small Allocations Process

I write as the Chief Executive Officer of North West Community Services (NWCS). This correspondence is fully endorsed by our Board.

NWCS is troubled by the information submitted to the Parliamentary Inquiry by the Member for Kellyville, Mr Ray Williams MP on 14 February 2025. The assertions made by Mr Williams need to be corrected.

NWCS has been damaged by this info, with further negative consequences possible. I accept that Mr Williams may not have been acting in malice towards NWCS, but he has a flawed understanding of these events, which need to be corrected for the public record.

Mr Williams gave evidence without any notice to us. This amounts to a denial of procedural fairness. I hope that this correspondence can be considered by the Committee and added to the public record for the Inquiry.

NWCS was formed in 1977, as a not for profit organisation and registered charity, based in Riverstone, serving the many suburbs and growing population of Sydney's North West Growth Area. We are an incorporated association, providing a diverse array of services and programs for our growing community, from the early years through to aged care services. We also provide outreach services to new neighbourhoods. We compete for government grants, receiving State and Federal funding. We are inadequately resourced for the large population and are increasingly relying on fundraising and donations to deliver essential services. We continuously advocate for investment in social infrastructure for the North West Growth Area. Our Annual Report can be found here <https://nwcs.org.au/who-we-are/>

This correspondence serves to correct the public record about the allegations and evidence given by the Member for Kellyville, Mr Ray Williams, to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Efficacy, Integrity, and Value for Money of the Local Small Allocations Process on 14 February 2025. This correspondence has been prepared with full endorsement of the NWCS Board.

On 21 December 2023, NWCS was a recipient of the Local Small Allocations Grant, having received \$50,000 to purchase a resilience/outreach/coffee van. The van would offer training and employment opportunities as part of our Work Connect Project, and services in an outreach model to new neighbourhoods in our North West Growth Area. These are neighbourhoods without social infrastructure. As an organisation, we are confident that the process undertaken was standard and in line with other grants funding programs. We did not have concerns about the process, and it is unlikely we would have made a submission if we were aware of the inquiry.

NWCS was not aware that the Inquiry was being held and was not informed that we were implicated in wrongdoing by Mr Williams in this Parliamentary Inquiry and this amounts to a lack of procedural fairness.

As submissions to the Inquiry are now closed. I write to provide further details about the information presented to the Committee and substantiate the facts:

- On 22 November 2022, Ms Sue Lawrence and I met with Mr Williams in his Rouse Hill office.
- I attended as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NWCS. Ms Sue Lawrence attended as President of the North West Business Chamber. At the time Ms Lawrence did declare she was also on the NWCS Board.
- In his statement to the Inquiry, Mr Williams alleged that Ms Lawrence ran the organisation and asked for \$50k for her organisation.
- NWCS is an incorporated association, with members, a Board and CEO. The CEO runs the organisation day to day, and the Board has overall governance, finance, and risk oversight. NWCS must comply with the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act 2009. We undertake an independent financial audit annually. As a registered charity, our funds are used explicitly to meet the organisations mission and purpose.
- It is impossible for Ms Lawrence to run and control NWCS and receive benefits in her own right. Ms Lawrence was a Board member at the time and not running NWCS.
- All Board members are volunteers, and do not receive any financial, or other, benefit for their service (apart from a certificate and small value token gift at the end of each year at our AGM)
- Ms Lawrence and I requested the meeting with the Member for Kellyville, as we are in the North West Growth Area of Sydney, and we service residents from neighbourhoods in The Hills LGA. We also see the impact from a lack of local education and employment opportunities. NWCS is the only service provider permanently based in the growth area and is inadequately resourced for the needs of the growing population. These residents would be voting constituents of Mr Williams, and it is reasonable to undertake advocacy with elected members for those neighbourhoods.

- Shortly after introductory pleasantries, Mr Williams raised the subject of the Labor candidate for the seat of Riverstone. Ms Lawrence did not raise this issue at any time during the meeting. Mr Williams noted it was to be a blonde woman, and he thought it would be Ms Lawrence.
- Ms Lawrence's response to Mr Williams was that it was not her, she had no interest in the role, and she did not know who the candidate would be. At the time, there had been no public announcement from the Labor Party about who the candidate would be.
- In the meeting with Mr Williams, we spoke about population growth, the need for social infrastructure, investment in human services, employment lands and opportunities for the changing demographic.
- In our meeting with Mr Williams, there was no mention of \$50k for the outreach van.
- Throughout the meeting the focus of discussion was securing Mr Williams support for an increase in the level of DCJ TEI funding for the north west growth area. This funded program has had no real growth for almost 15 years. NWCS receives this funding, and the result has been a decreasing dollar value for services as the population has grown.
- Mr Williams asked that I to write a letter to him requesting support for DCJ TEI funding and he would make representations to the then Minister for Families and Community Service, Natasha MacLaren-Jones.
- I wrote to Mr Williams on 1st December 2022 (copy attached). The funding noted in this correspondence clearly talks about DCJ TEI funding and population growth. There was no mention of a van or \$50k.
- In February 2023, I received a response from the Minister, Natasha MacLaren-Jones, (copy attached) advising there is no further TEI funding available. In her correspondence there is no mention of \$50k for a van.
- In 2023 we were made aware (from the Labor Candidate for the seat of Riverstone, Mr Warren Kirby) that each electorate would have \$400k allocated for worthwhile local small initiatives.
- In 2023 NWCS highlighted to Mr Warren Kirby the lack of social infrastructure in the North West Growth Area and our repeated exposure to disasters (we sit on the Hawkesbury Nepean Flood Plain and experienced four floods in two years). Our work in this community has been recognised widely, has informed academic research and attracted a government delegation from Tokyo to learn about our successful community based approach.
- We submitted our proposal for the \$50k resilience/outreach van based on evidence, knowing our community and emerging needs, supporting community through four floods, and having to find creative ways to engage with growing populations in new neighbourhoods as a result of the continued lack of investment in critical social infrastructure for the 200,000 people now calling the north west growth area home.
- Mr Kirby informed NWCS that if Labor were elected to government, there would be a process undertaken by the relevant Department and NWCS would need to meet those requirements to secure the funding. Mr Kirby never asked us to promote the Labor Party or himself.

- At no time did NWCS engage in any activity to promote any political party.
- When the government was formed in 2023 NWCS had contact from the Premier's Department and had to go through an application, reporting, and acquittal process. This funding ran like every other funded program. NWCS had to meet a number of requirements set by the Department before we could proceed to executing a funded deed and proceed with the project. There was nothing unusual about this funding program and it followed standard processes.
- Mr Williams told the Committee that NWCS should not have received this grant funding, and it should have been directed to a more legitimate/ worthy project. NWCS asserts that the need for the van was based in evidence and ongoing needs assessment for our growing north west growth area.
- NWCS is recognised as a trusted community organisation, with strong local relationships and a strong voice for advocacy to address the many unmet needs of our north west growth area. We have received public grants from both Liberal and Labor governments. We are the ONLY service permanently based in the area.
- We are dismayed to hear Mr Williams disparaging remarks about our organisation which struggles to support a growing community in a growth area of Sydney, particularly when this area is under resourced with essential social infrastructure and services.
- Mr Williams stated there was no transparency about the funding process, or who has received money. We note the Premier's Department has easily accessible, public information about the grants program including guidelines and a full list of all electorates and who got how much money and for what. See link below. A simple google search for the name of the funding program yields immediate results.

[Local Small Commitments Allocation - Home Page | NSW Government](#)

- NWCS has successfully met all the requirements of the LSCA grant program and received \$50k for the resilience/outreach van. The fit out costs for the van were donated by a private business. This LSCA funding did not cover the full costs of the project. NWCS meets the requirements of all our government funded programs, and those funded by the private sector. Mr Williams comments impact our reputation as a professional organisation that is highly respected in the communities that we work in.

In summary, NWCS is mentioned numerous times throughout the hearing. The allegations made by Mr Williams are serious, concerning and clearly implicate NWCS. His comments are damaging to our reputation. To the best of my knowledge, Mr Williams has not made his statements based on an objective review of the evidence of our application. He clearly states that this funding should not have been allocated to NWCS but should have been given to other initiatives. It would appear Mr Williams was not engaged in the meeting with me, held in November 2022, did not review any of the material that was given to him at the time, and based on the evidence he gave at the hearing, he has very little understanding of the work undertaken by NWCS for the north west growth area (which includes his seat of Kellyville). Given this, I believe Mr Williams is not well placed to make a statement suggesting NWCS should not have received the funding.

Mr Williams allegations are not based in fact and are not only disrespectful to our Board, workforce, and many volunteers, but also to all residents relying on our services in the north west growth area. This is a serious formal accusation against an incorporated association desperately trying to find ways to provide services to a large and rapidly growing population with a serious lack of investment over many years.

These false allegations towards NWCS need to be corrected, and Members of Parliament need to be held accountable about their allegations in Parliamentary Inquiries, particularly when they implicate third parties. This matter raises serious concerns for the future of our not for profit sector. Are we to become fearful of undertaking future advocacy for fear of being implicated in future inquiries?

Whilst I recognise that Mr Williams has made his allegations under Parliamentary Privilege, with the focus being the Labor Party, his assertions could have further negative consequences for NWCS and the community we serve. Mr Williams may not have intended to cause potential harm to NWCS, but the outcome of his evidence has the potential to do that. For this reason, it is imperative to correct the public record.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Kind Regards

Angela Van Dyke
CEO



Park Street, PO Box 418 Riverstone NSW 2765
Phone: (02) 9627 3622 Fax: (02) 9627 3225 www.riverstone.org.au

1 December 2022

Ray Williams MP

Dear Mr Williams

Re: Funding to address growing needs of North West Community

I write to request support for Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre and Community Aid Service Inc (RNC).
In summary:

- a. Review our current DCJ TEI contract to include specialist/ intensive support
- b. Provide additional funds to enable service delivery for the growing population of our North West Growth Area, including the suburbs in the North West of the Hills LGA

I thank you for your time to meet with me on 22 November, 2022 and write this correspondence in response to that conversation. This request has also been submitted to our State Member Kevin Connolly, in July 2022, who has made representation to Natasha MacLaren Jones, Minister for Family and Community Services. We have now been advised that we should continue applying for new grants.

As you are aware, Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre and Community Aid Service (RNC) receives a range of funding (both State and Federal Government) which is critical to ensuring access to services, creating community inclusion and harmony, building individual and community capacity and aiming to support our most vulnerable. RNC receives funding from the Department of Communities and Justice- Targetted Early Intervention. Within this we are funded for 4 service streams: Community Centre, Community Connection, Community Support, and Targetted Support. We are not funded for Intensive/ Specialist Support.

The North West Growth Area has 16 precincts, 12 sit within Blacktown LGA and 4 within The Hills LGA. Our core services are for Blacktown LGA, but we see growing demand from the neighbouring suburbs in the Hills LGA that form part of the North West Growth Area. Our DCJ funding does not cover these neighbourhoods. There are no services located in the precinct. We are the closest and most accessible service provider, and unsurprisingly residents are approaching our service for support. We refer to other providers, who are often full and rely on private sponsors/donors to support people on our borders. We see this resource diminishing as cost of living increases.

Blacktown City is one of the most diverse and fastest growing LGA's in NSW. Census 2021 shows that Blacktown City grew by almost 60,000 people since the 2016 census, with most settling in our North West Growth Precinct.

The Department of Infrastructure and Planning estimates the population now exceeds 403,000. The data shows that 1 in every 65 Australians calls Blacktown City home. Census 2021 shows 50% of the population are born in Australia, as we see increased cultural diversity and a 25% increase in people identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI). The local Riverstone community has 4% of the population identify as ATSI, and we have 9% of our DCJ clients identifying as ATSI, making this neighbourhood an important Aboriginal hub (behind Mt Druitt).

Census 2021 data shows increasing populations across all age cohorts, but importantly those age cohorts representing families.

There was a 30% increase in the number of dwellings built, with increased density and limited investment in social infrastructure (capital and human). RNC convened a Think Tank of key human services agencies in 2018, and the outcome demonstrated that there was little planning to invest in additional infrastructure or services for our North West. In fact, some public entities described a plan of providing an outreach model utilizing existing community infrastructure, (of which there is a significant under supply) whilst the majority indicated people will need to commute to existing major town centers such as Blacktown, Mt Druitt, Westmead or Penrith.

Population forecasts for Blacktown North West indicate over 200,000 people by 2036. This precinct alone will have a larger population than many entire Local Government Areas across NSW. What we see on the ground is that growth and development of residential housing is outstripping any projected planning forecasts set by the State.

Blacktown Council's Social Profile- North West Precinct identifies a range of issues and gaps for the community, and importantly, shows showing significant anomalies about "neighbourhood", cohesion, safety and belonging in our North West Precinct. A summary of the issues can be found on pages 5-6 of the report:

<https://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/community/social-profile/2016/north-west-precinct.pdf>

Over the last few years, we have seen the impact of a global pandemic, along with 4 floods in 18 months. RNC is at the forefront of community response in a time of disaster, works closely with public, not for profit and private stakeholders to deliver a responsive, flexible and appropriate support structure for people experiencing complex issues and vulnerability. We collaborated with Resilience NSW and hosted the Riverstone Flood Recovery Assistance Point for 3 weeks. Our role supporting vulnerable people will continue (flood recovery is a slow process, and we have been supporting people for many months post flood event). We are a trusted community service, offering a valued community hub, with a focus on quality outcomes. Our work in flood recovery has been acknowledged as best practice.

Over the last few years we have seen a 300% increase in demand for support from people experiencing crisis and vulnerability. This has been significant with the increase in disasters, but importantly, is heavily impacted by the rate of our population growth in our precinct. We are seeing increasing complexity and vulnerability.

We are seeing growing challenges with cost of living generally, however the limited supply of affordable housing, rentals and mortgage stress, increasing health care costs and growing mental health issues is impacting on the demand for our services. We have also seen residents in Rouse Hill, Kellyville and new neighbourhoods around Box Hill reaching out for support. Our TEI funding does not cover these suburbs (part of the Hills LGA) and at times we rely on private funding/ donations to offer support where existing services cannot meet needs. Our organization needs additional resources to ensure we can continue providing quality services and program. To demonstrate the current level of need, a snapshot of our TEI and actual deliverables was given to our State Member in our correspondence to him and is shown in the following table:

Community Centre deliverables (maximum target) is 1000 per year	January-June 2022 (6 months) we delivered 2,977
Community Connections (maximum target) is 720 per year	January- June 2022, (6 months) We delivered 3,495
Targetted Support deliverables (maximum target) is 240 per year	July 2021 – June 2022 (12 months) We serviced 476
Annual DCJ TEI funding \$263,902.86	8.7% of our clients identify as ATSI

Our data above demonstrates the fatigue in our service, as our workloads are significantly higher than the maximum targets set. This is despite our attempts to utilise all the other service options for clients, and is a reflection of population growth and increasing complexity for households.

Importantly, The Blacktown North West Precinct has been growing rapidly, (despite COVID and little immigration), and without an increase in resourcing to reflect the population growth. I have attached our Annual Report for 2021-2022 which shows the broad scope of our work. Our facebook page and website are valued sources of information www.riverstone.org.au

Each year we are seeing an growing demand for service, support and programs. Despite referrals to other services, people are struggling to get the assistance they need, at the time they need.

We are seeing long wait lists for services. Whilst we endeavour to refer clients to a broad range of specialist services, we often find they are told there is a long wait list, they may not meet strict eligibility criteria, they can't get through to speak to anyone, or they are eventually referred back to us for support.

We are also seeing growing demand for mental health and wellbeing support, across all ages, but there has been specific demand for children and young people. Our team refer to the broad spectrum of opportunities for mental health support, and we are finding the primary health care system is very slow,

finding clinicians is very difficult and can take 6-12 months on a wait list, and families often fall out of this system due to the gap in fees for private practitioners. We are also seeing long wait lists within mental health support services in the Health District and via NGO's. Families, and young people without family support are experiencing heightened states of distress, and our team are dealing with increasing cases of suicidal ideation. Whilst we are trained to manage people in distress, it creates further difficulty to our workforce when they can't offer appropriate levels of support (and they can't secure access to the mental health system) and go home wondering whether a client will become another suicide statistic.

We are receiving referrals and requests for targeted support with complex case management and counselling for children, young people and families from police, health, education, local government and NGO's. Sadly, whilst we have staff with qualifications and skills for this work, our current funding limits our capacity for how many people we can support at any given time. If the NSW Government could increase our funding to offer intensive/specialist support via TEI funding, that would go some way to supporting people whilst they wait 6-12 months for the mainstream mental health services.

I am seeking your support to help us secure additional funding, possibly via TEI. This would enable us to recruit additional staff that reflects the volume of work being delivered.

I also ask that our DCJ TEI contract provide intensive support (one service stream we are not currently funded for) with provision to support neighbourhoods in our North West Growth Area that are near our border and part of the Hills LGA.

I note that there are various various grants available from time to time. Whilst we do submit applications, there are limitations to many grant processes, often favoring larger organisations. However, this does not address the current and immediate demand for our rapidly growing, nor the short term focus of the funding cycle when we are supporting a rapidly growing population in our North West Precinct. Whilst we have been proactive undertaking fundraising we are seeing a decrease in donations as the cost of living impacts individuals and businesses.

I hope you are able to support this request.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Kind Regards

Angela Van Dyke
CEO



The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC

Minister for Families and Communities

Minister for Disability Services

OFFICIAL

EAP22/12855

Mr Ray Williams MP
Member for Castle Hill
Suite 202, Rouse Hill Town Centre
10 – 14 Market Lane
ROUSE HILL NSW 2155

Sent via email:

Dear Mr  Williams,

Thank you for your letter of 6 December 2022 about additional funding for Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre.

I would like to commend the staff at Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre for their continued and valued hard work and support that they provide vulnerable members of the community.

I would encourage Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre to continue to work with other funded organisations that support The Hills Shire Local Government Area that offer similar supports needed by the community.

Unfortunately, no additional funding for the Targeted Earlier Intervention Program is available, should funding become available an expression of interest from suitable services will be sought and a procurement process followed.

If you would like more information, please contact Ms Sue Day, Senior Commissioning and Planning Officer, Western Sydney Nepean Blue Mountains District

Yours sincerely,

The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC

Minister for Families and Communities

Minister for Disability Services

15 February 2023

OFFICIAL