

Good evening chair and committee members. My name is Cara Varian and I'm the CEO of the NSW Council of Social Service, known to many of you as NCOSS. I am joined by my colleague Ben McAlpine.

We advocate for the needs of individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage and represent the community services sector. They are a dedicated group who provide essential services to support the people, families and communities of NSW.

Welcomes the opportunity to participate.

Community services work is deeply rewarding. It is profoundly personal work and there can be a toll to supporting people experiencing poverty, violence and trauma. Our sector faces critical challenges. Service demand is increasing without commensurate resources to meet that demand. This is causing ballooning workloads, burnout and job insecurity amid rising living costs.

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Simultaneously, provider organisations struggle with escalating operational expenses, including sharp increases in workers compensation premiums. Given these pressures, getting this reform right is crucial. It will be important that the right balance is struck between effectively supporting the psychological welfare of workers, supporting employers, and managing scheme sustainability.

This a recently released exposure and there are a number of issues that require further clarity. The success of these reforms will depend

- Achieving that clarity with the input of experts and people with lived experience
- Balancing the needs of workers, employers and scheme sustainability
- Transition arrangements to ensure that people and the knowledge to move to the new arrangements

We welcome the proposed preventative measures that have been flagged by the government and request that these measures are extended to support the social service sector.

We advocate for reforms that balance the scheme's financial sustainability with ensuring the wellbeing of essential workers and the organisations who fulfill the government's social policy objectives. Without protecting these organisations, broader social policy goals are compromised.