

17 July 2025

Secretariat

Select Committee on Foundational and Disability Supports Available for Children and Young People in New South Wales

## Response to Question on Notice taken on 19 June 2025

### Question

- 1. You do a lot of work around mapping cost-of-living pressures and also the increasing poverty in different areas. Have you done any analysis overlapping that with the need for disability supports? If so, are there particular areas of more need than others?**

### Response

NCOSS has not conducted specific gap analysis around disability supports in NSW. However, areas with a high concentration of low-income households with disability could be prioritised for place-based, wraparound supports for families experiencing complex challenges.

NCOSS economic disadvantage research has found that as of 2021, people with a disability in NSW are almost three times more likely to live in a low-income household compared to people without disability.<sup>1</sup> The research further showed that:

- 31% of people with disability were on low incomes, a significant increase since 2016 (21%). By comparison, only 12% people without disability are on low incomes.
- The low-income rate for people with disability is slightly higher in regional NSW (33%) and slightly lower in Greater Sydney (30%).
- Low-income households with disability in Greater Sydney are concentrated in pockets across the City and Inner South, Inner South West, Parramatta and South West SA4 regions<sup>2</sup>, with the highest rates in:
  - South Coogee and Maroubra-South<sup>3</sup> (51%)
  - Waterloo (50%)
  - Riverwood (49%)
  - Surry Hills (49%)
  - Redfern (48%)
  - Warwick Farm (47%)

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<sup>1</sup> Vidyattama, Y., Brown, L., Tanton, R., and NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS). (2023), *Mapping Economic Disadvantage in New South Wales*, 2021. NATSEM, Faculty of Business, Government and Law, University of Canberra. Report Commissioned by NCOSS.

<sup>2</sup> SA4 refers to the ABS Statistical Area Level 4 regions in Australia (the next level down from states and territories).

<sup>3</sup> SA2 regions (ABS Statistical Area Level 2 regions representing a medium-sized community that interacts together socially and economically).

- In contrast, areas with the highest rates of low-income households with disability in regional NSW are more dispersed:
  - Mudgee Surrounds – East<sup>4</sup> (52%)
  - Eden, Far West and Wentworth-Balranald Region (51%)
  - Walcha (50%)
  - Armidale Surrounds – North (49%)
  - Scone and Tenterfield (48%)

NCOSS cost-of-living research also found that financial hardship disproportionately affects households with disability that are living in poverty or on low incomes.<sup>5</sup> In 2024:

- Two-thirds (67%) had no money set aside for emergencies
- Two-thirds (66%) reported that medical care and health expenses were in their top 5 areas of expenses most under pressure.

### Supplementary Information

NCOSS Director of the School Gateway Project, Olivia Wright, wishes to provide additional evidence in response to the following question from the Hon. Anthony D’Adam (page 52 of the transcript):

*Question: How many specialists are involved in the assessment process?*

The initial screening was conducted by parents with support from the Mirrung team using an online screening platform designed by UNSW, incorporating standardised screening tools such as ‘Learn the Signs Act Early’ and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). Results of this screening were reviewed and considered by preschool and classroom teachers and the school learning and support team. The students who were identified with most significant concerns (a small minority) were referred to specialists for further assessment – including the school paediatrician, the school-funded speech therapist, and where possible LHD-community specialists. The Coordination of this process was managed by both NCOSS and the Mirrung team leader (an Assistant Principal at Ashcroft PS).

Should you have any questions in relation to this response, please do not hesitate to contact me at .

Yours sincerely,

Ben McAlpine  
Acting Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Institute of Public Policy and Governance (2024), *Impossible Choices: Decisions NSW communities shouldn’t have to make*, University of Technology, Sydney. Commissioned by NCOSS.