

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**The Hon. Linda Burney MP  
Minister for the State Plan  
Minister for Community Services**

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**Wednesday 9 June 2010**

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES GET ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT**

Neighbourhood Centres and other community centres have been given a \$10 million boost in the 2010-11 Budget, recognition by the Keneally Government of the critical work they do, Minister for Community Services Linda Burney announced today.

“These centres are usually the first port of call for people in need in their local community. This funding will support the essential services they provide to disadvantaged and marginalised members of the community,” Ms Burney said.

“Their clients include many vulnerable and struggling groups, such as the unemployed, homeless, mentally ill, women fleeing domestic violence, refugees, socially isolated, young/single struggling parents, the elderly and disabled,” Ms Burney said.

“I know this enhancement of the Community Services Grants Program (CSGP) has the full support of every local MP. They see every day the remarkable work these centres do, with their teams of volunteers, to build vibrant and resilient suburbs, towns and townships across NSW.

“Investment in strengthening local communities is an investment in prevention. Stronger, healthier communities require significantly less in the way of Government services, especially high cost crisis programs.”

Brian Smith, Executive Officer of the Local Community Services Association, praised the role of Minister Burney in securing new funding for community strengthening.

“Ms Burney really understands the value of community-based organisations and has fought hard for this sector,” he said.

“This is the best news neighbourhood and community centres have had for many years. These organisations are the heart of their communities, they have been pleading their case for better funding for many years and at last it is being heard.

“Communities will be stronger, people who are socially isolated will be included, and people who do not know where to turn will have a place to go as a result of this decision.”

Through early intervention programs and referral services for struggling families and individuals, Neighbourhood Centres, Migrant Resource Centres and other community-based organisations funded by CSGP make a critical contribution to school readiness and parenting skills.

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By building social inclusion, they also create harmonious communities with higher levels of employment and volunteering, less crime and anti-social behaviour, and healthier children and families.

International research confirms that the characteristics of a local community are linked to a child's readiness for school, achievement, teenage pregnancy, emotional and behavioural issues and health.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to boosting Community Services Grants Program funding, the Minister and Community Services have been working closely with the sector to reform and realign this long-standing funding program.

"From July 2010 we will begin separating the 900 CSGP-funded services into two streams, based on the services they currently deliver," Ms Burney said.

"Around 425 community strengthening and development services such as Neighbourhood Centres will benefit from the \$10 million Budget enhancement.

"The remainder, which provide early intervention and prevention programs to children, young people and families, will have the opportunity to benefit from the \$4.5M *Keep Them Safe* funding the Premier announced in March."

The reform will also include the transition from CSGP to the agency's community strengthening program, Community Builders. Community Builders (formerly the Area Assistance Scheme) will continue to support grants of 1 to 3 years for specific projects focused on building stronger communities and connecting the disadvantaged and vulnerable members of those communities.

As part of this reform process, the Local Community Services Association has been funded to assist services transferring to the Community Builders program, and to provide information and advice to Government regarding the transition process.

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards, B. (2005) Does it take a village? An investigation of neighbourhood influences on Australian children's development. *Family Matters*, 72, 36-43