

5 December 2025

Michael Lye  
Secretary  
Department of Social Services  
GPO Box 9820  
Canberra ACT 2601



By your side

Via: [families@dss.gov.au](mailto:families@dss.gov.au)

Dear Mr Lye,

**RE: A NEW APPROACH TO PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN**

On behalf of the Australian Services Union (ASU), I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important review to the departmental processes for programs funded to support families and children.

The ASU is one of Australia's largest unions covering a wide range of industries and nearly 135,000 workers across the country. The ASU represents workers in the social, community and disabilities sectors. Our members are on the front lines of supporting families and children with a range of needs each and every day. They take pride in their work and want to provide the best possible care and support based on their skills and expertise.

It is critical that this review leads to more employment stability and better conditions for the workforce. A supported workforce means better outcomes for clients and the community, and this principle must be central in determining funding and reporting requirements for the social sector.

In considering the Discussion Paper and guiding questions, the ASU's primary recommendation is that longer term and more sustainable funding of at least 5 years must be introduced for funded programs, and longer-term funding from government must come with a requirement that providers must guarantee ongoing, secure work.

To support the implementation of longer funding cycles and in response to the questions outlined in the Discussion Paper, the ASU recommends reforms aligned with the following themes:

1. Any changes to funding streams must not privilege larger organisations above smaller ones, and connection to community must be prioritised;
2. Increased reporting obligations must coincide with adequate funding that ensures staffing time required to report is paid. There must be no unpaid overtime to meet new or higher reporting standards;
3. Disruption to communities and the clients our members work with must be minimised;
4. To address skills shortages and high turnover rates, workforce planning of the community sector should be implemented, in consultation with the ASU; and
5. The true cost of services, including legal minimum rates of pay, penalties, allowances, overtime, time for supervision and training, must be set as a floor in grants and procurement processes and the Department should work with procuring organisations and the ASU to ensure these standards are consistently met.

If we can provide any further information about this submission, please do not hesitate to contact [REDACTED]



## ASU Submission

Department of Social Services

### A NEW APPROACH TO PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

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[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

**Organisation:** Australian Services Union

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**Date:** 5 December 2025

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## 1. Introduction

The Australian Services Union (ASU) is one of Australia's largest unions, representing approximately 135,000 members. ASU members work in a wide variety of industries and occupations in both the private, public and community sectors.

In the community sector, ASU members work as support workers, social workers, youth workers, financial councillors, advocates, specialist practitioners, educators, carers, trainers, managers, CEOs and admin workers across a range of small, medium, large and specialist services including family and domestic violence, homelessness, alcohol and other drug, disability, First Nations justice, community legal, and other community services. ASU members care deeply about their clients. Many have lived experience and/or have developed close community ties with the cohorts they support. Their passion and expertise drive the outcomes funded programs seek to achieve, and their skills and experience must be respected.

The ASU welcomes the Community Sector Grants Framework (the Framework) and is appreciative of Minister Plibersek and previously Minister Rishworth, as well as of the work of the Department in establishing the Framework. We also appreciate the Minister's constructive approach and open working relationship with the ASU to address many of the key issues facing the community sector. We look forward to continuing this working relationship throughout the changes proposed via this review and into the future.

While the ASU has not had the opportunity to consult deeply with our membership on this specific proposal, it is logical for the Department to pool resources for better grant management and service provision. This would be further aided by longer term funding to enable community workers to develop deeper relationships with their clients and refine their practice.

### **1.1 Quality community services for families and children can only be achieved with minimum five-year funding cycles**

The key recommendation of the ASU in this review is that longer funding of minimum five-year terms for all community services must be established. This must extend to programs for families and children.

Longer term funding will allow for many of the stated aims of the proposed reforms of the review and the Framework. For example, it will allow for:

- Practitioners to develop deep relationships with communities,
- Workers to refine their skills and improve service delivery,
- Continuity of service and support for clients and the community,
- Providers to trial pilots and expand successful programs,
- Practitioners and organisations alike to build trust with clients, notably to develop trust with those with complex needs, which is vital to quality service delivery,
- The capacity for providers to track outcomes over time,
- Practitioners to have job security, meaning overall increased rates of retention because they can develop skills, undertake training and deliver high quality services,
- Financial security for small organisations, alongside larger organisations, guaranteeing specialist community knowledge and connection.

It will also provide certainty to a sector that has long been overlooked and ensure a vital social safety net for Australians with complex backgrounds and needs. Ahead of the 2022 election, Senator Jenny McAlister, as Shadow Assistant Minister for Communities and the Prevention of Family Violence, committed to five-year

funding terms in community services. The ASU looks forward to working with the Government to fully implement this commitment.

**Recommendation 1: The Commonwealth Government must implement long term funding cycles for the community sector.**

Long term funding must correspond to quality, secure jobs for community and disability workers. It must be a condition of grant allocation, funding and contracting that organisations who are the recipients of contractual security ensure the workforce has job security.

Government funds approximately \$470 million worth of community and disability services, and yet this funding currently does not provide good outcomes for workers. Research commissioned conducted by Dr Natasha Cortis and Dr Megan Blaxland, of the UNSW in review of the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHADS) Award found that nearly 1 in 3 (28.9%) community workers say they have borrowed money from family or friends to meet their basic living costs.<sup>1</sup> More than half (55.2%) within the industry find it difficult to get ahead financially.<sup>2</sup> An ACOSS survey found that only 50% of workers thought their pay was sufficient,<sup>3</sup> and only one-third expected to be able to retire with enough superannuation to live on.<sup>4</sup> This survey also found that of frontline workers, only 59% planned to stay in their current role within the next 12 months, and 12% indicated they wanted to leave their organisation.<sup>5</sup> Further, ABS data shows the health care and social assistance industry had the most people leave the industry in 2025, at 14.1%.<sup>6</sup> Accommodation and food services was the next most common industry with people leaving at 12.2%.<sup>7</sup>

Longer term funding cycles are necessary both for the clients ASU members in the community sector support, and for the workforce itself. Organisations who benefit from longer term funding must pass along the benefits of this security. Government procurement processes, such as the incoming Secure Australian Jobs Code, must ensure that longer term funding create secure jobs with good conditions for workers.

**Recommendation 2: The Commonwealth Government must implement long term, five-year funding cycles with a corresponding commitment that employers will be required to ensure long term funding is used to create secure, ongoing jobs with good conditions.**

**Recommendation 3: The Commonwealth Government's procurement standards which are to be set out via the Australian Jobs Code must apply to social, community and disability services funded by government.**

**2. DSS's proposal to change sources of funding must not diminish hard fought workplace rights**

The ASU has not had the opportunity to consult widely with our membership for this review and is not able to take a position on DSS's proposal to combine programs into one larger pool and three streams. However, our industrial experience informs the following recommendations about job security in transition, size of community organisations funded and time for reporting.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Natasha Cortis and Dr Megan Blaxland, UNSW Social Policy Research Centre, "Australia's social and community services workforce: characterisation, classification and value", 19 April 2024, accessed: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/661f04b91fdda6655ac8d468/t/664ee846f6e0332f1a2d3b3a/1716447307208/Final+report+for+ASU\\_19\\_April\\_2024.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/661f04b91fdda6655ac8d468/t/664ee846f6e0332f1a2d3b3a/1716447307208/Final+report+for+ASU_19_April_2024.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), "At the precipice: Australia's community sector through the cost of living crisis", 2023, accessed: <https://www.acoss.org.au/acss-april-2023/>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (February 2025) Job Mobility, accessed: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/jobs/job-mobility/latest-release#change-in-industry>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

## 2.1 Guarantees that no worker goes backwards

In an already insecure workforce, changes to funding arrangements can lead to job losses, disruptions to continuity of service, reduced hours, change to work plans, and amendments to rostering and client allocation. This is especially true for experienced staff leaving the sector because of a lack of job security. Changes to funding and reporting structures must not result in any worker losing their job or having a reduction in hours or conditions. Nor should it diminish the quality or continuity of service communities receive. While the ASU wants to work with the Government to ensure these changes are rolled out fairly, the Government must guarantee that no worker will lose their employment and that no worker go backwards in terms of wages, conditions, or rostered hours in the course of these changes.

**Recommendation 4: In rolling out these changes, the Commonwealth Government must work with the ASU and with the community sector to ensure no worker goes backward. It should be a term of any new contracts or of ongoing funding that the workforce conditions are maintained or improved.**

## 2.2 Time for reporting must be paid

The Discussion Paper outlines the uniform reporting requirements that will be necessary of all organisations funded by DSS. Any additional work required of community sector workers to meet these requirements must be paid work on paid time.

Community workers already undertake substantial unpaid work, despite recent reforms such as the Right to Disconnect. It is estimated that 15% of work in the community sector is unpaid.<sup>8</sup> Full-time workers in the community sector work on average 4.5 hours unpaid weekly, and part-time workers work on average 2.6 hours unpaid weekly.<sup>9</sup> For a full-time Level 4 worker under the SCHADS Award, this means a loss on average of over \$10,000 per year.<sup>10</sup> Given the Productivity Commission and other research organisations suggest that there are approximately 1 million workers in Australia broadly part of community services industry,<sup>11</sup> lost wages in the sector due to unpaid work would total billions of dollars.

More must be done to ensure workers in the community sector are paid for their time at work and additional requirements for reporting must not be added to community workers' already infinite to-do list. The Department should work with the ASU and community organisations to ensure there is adequate funding to pay community workers for the time required to undertake this reporting. Where there is not adequate funding for reporting to be on paid time, funding should be increased.

**Recommendation 5: The Department must work with the ASU and community organisations to ensure that any additional reporting is undertaken by workers on paid time. Funding must be increased where reporting standards could only be achieved by unpaid overtime.**

Where reporting requirements are not met, there must be protections for workers where it was structurally not possible for them to meet the standards set. For community workers who are often precariously

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<sup>8</sup> Cortis, N. and Blaxland, M. (2022) Carrying the costs of the crisis: Australia's community sector through the Delta outbreak. Sydney: ACOSS. <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ACSS-Full-2021-Report-v6.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Dr Natasha Cortis and Dr Megan Blaxland, UNSW Social Policy Research Centre, "Australia's social and community services workforce: characterisation, classification and value", 19 April 2024, page 24, 25 accessed: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/661f04b91fdda6655ac8d468/t/664ee846fbe0332f1a2dbb3a/1716447307208/Final+report+for+ASU\\_19\\_April\\_2024.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/661f04b91fdda6655ac8d468/t/664ee846fbe0332f1a2dbb3a/1716447307208/Final+report+for+ASU_19_April_2024.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Calculated based on level 4.1 Classification under SCHADS Award, earning \$44.58 per hour

<sup>11</sup> Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2025, accessed: <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2025/community-services/> and

IbidWorld, Community Services in Australia – Employment (2008-2032), accessed: <https://www.ibisworld.com/australia/employment/community-services/1770/>

employed casually or on short-term contracts, low paid, and undertaking unpaid overtime, outsourcing organisational responsibility to individual workers, for example via discipline for not meeting reporting standards, is unfair. The burden must not fall on individual workers given insecure funding leading to insecure work and the already high workload associated with current reporting requirements in addition to frontline client duties.

**Recommendation 6: The Commonwealth Government must work with the ASU to ensure that responsibility is not shifted to individual workers for reporting standards in circumstances where it was not structurally possible to meet the standards.**

### **2.3 True cost of service**

The process of competitive tendering can undermine the hard-fought industrial gains won by ASU members. Providers that submit bids with lowest price often do so by squeezing workers' wages, or by misclassifying workers on lower levels while still expecting outputs of those on higher levels. Dr Cortis and Dr Blaxland conservatively estimate that 66.7% of community sector workers are under-classified on at least one of three measures.<sup>12</sup> The community workforce is women dominated and often in insecure or contract-based work. Negotiating higher wages and good conditions is challenging given the structural issues of funding being determined, at times, by the lowest cost bid.

Instead, the Department should work with the ASU to determine the true cost for service. This true cost should be a minimum floor that cannot be lowered. It should reflect minimum wages costs, based on the Award and correct classifications for the work required. It should also reflect additional industrial entitlements such as training, supervision, allowances, overtime, annual and long service leave, and time to meet occupational health and safety (OHS) obligations, as well as the time it takes to meet the reporting requirements set by the Department. Minimum floors should be embedded into every tendering and/or grant process before the process is commenced, and should be a term of the contract with providers.

**Recommendation 7: The Department should work with the ASU to determine the true cost for community services. This cost should form a minimum floor that is established before tendering/grant processes commence, and should become a term of contracting.**

### **2.4 Relational contracting as a tool for secure work**

The notion of relational contracting for administering community services and grants is one supported by the ASU in principle, should it work hand in hand with longer funding periods and meeting at least the minimum industrial standards. The idea of the Department working with organisations who have a pre-existing demonstrated capacity to improve particular standards, is logical. The Department should play an active role in ensuring services are of the highest quality and workers supported to deliver these services. Relational contracting could be used to support job security for community workers.

The Department should work with the ASU to ensure fair industrial conditions are achieved, and at the very least the minimum standards adhered to. This should include wages, entitlements, allowances, conditions and safety. The Department should embed ongoing consultation with ASU organisers and delegates to ensure these minimum industrial standards are met by providers as part of new relational contracting arrangements. Meeting these minimum standards should be a contractual obligation of community organisations, and the

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<sup>12</sup> Cortis, N. and Blaxland, M. (2022) Carrying the costs of the crisis: Australia's community sector through the Delta outbreak. Sydney: ACOSS.  
<https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ACSS-Full-2021-Report-v6.pdf>



Department should proactively ensure they're met. The ASU seeks further information about how the relational contracting process will work.

### **3. Community Need**

Community need would be best served by long term, ongoing funding to enable optimal support and outcomes for families and their children. Continuity of care and support is key for better outcomes. ASU members know long-term funding would provide organisations with time to invest in the skills of the workforce, providing workers with the continuing development to foster skills and expertise to meet the increasingly complex needs of the community.

Long term funding also allows for the workforce to genuinely build connections with communities, understand their needs and develop trust. This is especially important for regional, migrant and First Nations communities, but also for people experiencing particular forms of disadvantage such as family violence and homelessness, or those who have interacted with the criminal justice system. It also allows practitioners the time to address urgent needs, and then over time move towards identifying and developing leaders in communities and create self-sustaining community-led responses based on experience and knowledge. The ASU joins with a united community sector in calling for long-term, at least five-year funding contracts.

Community need should also be assessed in consultation with the community and the workforce. The determinants outlined in the Framework's Discussion Paper are relatively limited, and should ensure all perspectives from a range of lived experiences and cultural expertise are considered.

#### **3.1 No one should profit from supporting families and children in need**

As a matter of principle, for-profit organisations must not receive government community sector funding. This funding is there to uplift those who need additional supports; children and people with disabilities, women and children escaping family violence or being subjected to coercive control, or people suffering with alcohol and other drug addiction, amongst many others.

Profiteering off the back of those who need support is wrong.

For-profit organisations also squeeze workers. They're more likely to misclassify workers, expect unpaid overtime and/or pay them incorrectly. These practices are wage theft. For an already overworked and undervalued workforce, it is wrong that workers' stolen wages would contribute to companies' bottom lines. Especially in the community sector.

The Government must have no role in supporting for-profit organisations in the community sector, and the ASU remains opposed to Telstra Health being awarded the Escaping Violence Program.

For-profit providers consistently have worse outcomes than not-for-profit providers. For example, in the early childhood education and care sector, for-profit providers are 36% more likely than not-for-profit providers to be failing to meet minimum standards.<sup>13</sup> By comparison, 28% of all not-for-profit providers are exceeding standards, whereas only 13% of for-profit providers exceed standards.<sup>14</sup> This pattern is replicated across community services.

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<sup>13</sup> Analysis of Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) Childcare Inquiry Final Report, December 2023, accessed: [https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/childcare-inquiry-final%20report-december-2023\\_0.pdf](https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/childcare-inquiry-final%20report-december-2023_0.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> French, M. & Meagher, G. (2025) "What is going wrong with childcare in Australia", for The Conversation, accessed: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2025/03/19/what-is-going-wrong-with-childcare-in-australia.html>

The government must commit to contract only with not-for-profit providers; both for the benefit of the communities who rely on quality services but also to ensure the dignity of workers. This in turn assists with the retention of workers, further ensuring quality outcomes for the community.

**Recommendation 8: The Government must commit to contract only to not-for-profit organisations. For profit organisations should receive no government community funding.**

### **3.2 Minimise community disruption**

Continuity of services to families and the community is vitally important. Families have built trusted relationships with certain practitioners and have disclosed confidential, personal information to seek support. Change in services and a change in practitioners for clients means they have to re-share their stories, which is often retraumatising. Continuity of practitioner is best practice. Families must be able to maintain their expectations of a services. The delivery must remain consistent, regardless of the funding structures from the Department. There must be a goal of minimal to no disruption of the communities served in any changes to funding processes.

**Recommendation 9: No community or client disruption must be a key principle in changes to Departmental funding processes.**

### **3.3 Larger organisations must not be privileged**

Diversity of services is necessary to meet the diversity of needs amongst the community. The Department should continue to balance funding provision for smaller, medium and larger organisations to ensure specialist services and services tailored to a particular community can maintain operation, as well as larger generalist organisations who deliver services across the country.

ASU members work across organisations of all sizes, specialties and capacities. There is a risk that in pooling funding into one larger source, larger organisations are more readily able to meet the needs set out by the Department in contracting, and that over time, it is more difficult for smaller and medium organisations to compete with larger ones. Specific measures must be put in place to level the playing field.

It is noted that in the Discussion Paper, DSS plans to work with community organisations to meet specific community need. This is welcomed but should not be limited to only place-based services and should extend to specialist services.

**Recommendation 10: The Commonwealth Government must ensure that changes to funding pools does not privilege one type of size of organisation over another. Specialist services and services tailored to specific communities must continue to be supported.**

It is also noted in the Discussion Paper that community need for community organisations may be informed by an 'active volunteer base'. While volunteering and being part of a community is important, any job that needs to be done must be performed by a paid worker. Any over-reliance on volunteers undermines the valuation of the skilled work of community workers and risks worsening the gender pay gap.

Working with community-based organisations must not undermine the paid workforce or allow for the paid workforce to be replaced by volunteers. Community sector workers are highly skilled and often have qualifications to enable them to work in complex environments. They can perform this work due to their extensive experience, both work experience and lived experience. Seeking out volunteer run or volunteer



dependent organisations would be disastrous for clients who rely on this high standard of support and care. Community connection instead must be fostered by providing long term and reliable funding structures to enable local community organisations to develop relationships and tailored approaches to the individuals they're working with.

Larger organisations are advantaged because they can pool resources and provide more wrap around, holistic services to families and their children. They can also pool resources to foster staff development, such as providing more detailed supervision and/or coaching, and better career pathways to utilise experience. Processes for smaller and medium organisations to collaborate and pool resources to the benefit of staff and the communities they serve should be fostered by the Department to ensure equity of service. This would also assist with limiting over-reliance on volunteers.

**Recommendation 11: The Commonwealth Government must ensure that in protecting community-based organisations through funding arrangement changes, volunteers are not being relied on to do work that should be performed by paid staff.**

**Recommendation 12: Community based organisations must continue to be supported, and the Department should provide opportunities for collaboration to share resources and provide career opportunities for community workers.**

#### **4. Supporting a skilled workforce**

##### **4.1 Keeping workers in the community sector**

The community sector workforce needs to be supported in this transition of Departmental processes. Turnover in the community and disability sectors is already too high. As outlined at 1.1, the community sector has the highest rates of people leaving by any industry. Turnover in the community sector has been a persistent issue for some years. For example, a 2023 ACOSS survey found that 75% of organisational leaders found retention of workers to be the key challenge in their organisation.<sup>15</sup>

Workers leaving the sector is extremely harmful for the communities they serve. The skills, knowledge, rapport and tailored experience vanishes when workers leave the sector, and it can take years for it to be rebuilt. Not only do new workers have to learn the specific approaches of their new employer and the needs of their community, but they also must build trust with their clients which can take months or years. That is, if workers can be found in the first place, noting the aforementioned issues with job security and unstable funding.

The Department should proactively undertake workforce mapping and planning. The skills of the future should be assessed and the number of workers needed in specific communities and within specialist areas determined. This should be aligned to projected needs of the community. Workers should be trained to meet the needs outlined in this plan.

Pre-existing skills not currently recognised, such as lived experience, cultural connection, and language proficiency must receive the due recognition warranted. The ASU has been advocating for better recognition of these skills in the Social Community Housing and Disability Services (SCHADS) Award review, and notes the work of Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) who is reviewing whether skills recognition is equitable. This should

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<sup>15</sup> Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), "At the precipice: Australia's community sector through the cost of living crisis", 2023, accessed: <https://www.acoss.org.au/acss-april-2023/>

connect with the work of DSS. This planning will also enable the Department to better understand community needs and align funding and contractual processes with this need.

**Recommendation 13: The Department should undertake workforce planning and development, in consultation with the ASU. Skills development and recognition should be a core part of this work and build off the work of JSA.**

The ASU is fighting for increased wages, better conditions, and more respect for community sector workers. Workers in unionised worksites with Enterprise Agreements (EAs) in the healthcare and social assistance sector are paid 35.8% higher than non-unionised workers,<sup>16</sup> and on average union members earn \$251 more per week than non-union members.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to better wages, the ASU is fighting for better career progression, more training and reduced workloads for members. These measures will help with retention.

The Government should also work with the ASU to support multi-employer bargaining across the sector to achieve standardisation of wages, conditions, training and career progression. This would also further simplify and make consistent contracting when true cost of service principles are embedded.

#### **4.2 Workers must be retained and supported during contract transition**

The workforce must be better supported when the Department determines not to renew a contract, and another organisation successfully bids to run that pre-existing service. In many instances, especially service delivery in regional areas, change in provider does not mean a change in workers. Workers simply end their employment with one organisation and commence with another.

The ASU has seen bidding processes whereby new providers bid for the same service for a lower cost. This often leads to workers' wages going backwards. This is especially problematic where workers take up employment with the new employer, for their same pre-existing role but are forced onto a lower salary. This issue adds to the high turnover in the sector. The Department must require new providers to recognise pre-existing employment and guarantee continuity of employment and conditions.

**Recommendation 14: The Commonwealth Government should review industrial legislation to ensure it allows for the Department to require new providers to guarantee continuity of employment and continuity of conditions.**

### **5. Conclusion**

The ASU thanks the Department for the opportunity to review funding processes and administration for services for families and their children. These programs would be best benefited by longer-term funding that is used to ensure secure, ongoing jobs for the workforce. This would enable workers and practitioners to hone their craft, develop relationships with communities and deliver unique programs.

Changes to funding structures should guarantee that no worker goes backwards in terms of their employment or conditions at work. Reporting required by the Department must be undertaken on paid time.

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<sup>16</sup> Australia Institute, "ABS Data shows being in union delivers better wages" (December 2022), Greg Jericho, accessed: <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/abs-data-shows-being-in-a-union-delivers-better-wages/>

<sup>17</sup> Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), "Union members earn more. Here's why", accessed: <https://www.australianunions.org.au/union-members-earn-more-heres-why/>

The Department should work with the ASU to determine the true cost for service, and this cost should be embedded into funding and contractual arrangements. Relational contracting could foreseeably be used to bolster ongoing employment and good conditions of the workforce. It could also ensure quality services are delivered to the community, provided sufficient safeguards are in place to protect workers' jobs, wages and conditions.

Community need is best served by not-for-profit organisation. The Government should not contract with for-profit organisations to deliver vital community services. Minimum disruption to communities must also be a key goal in the funding arrangements transitions.

Community need principles should also account for the small, medium and large organisations, as well as specialist and generalist providers being funded. However, volunteers must never be used to replace the paid workforce of any organisation, particularly small and community run organisations. Continuity of employment for workers affected by any transition should also be guaranteed.

The community workforce supporting families and their children is skilled and experienced. Their skills must be respected, yet turnover is too high. This undermines their capability to provide best practice supports. The Department should undertake workforce planning and development to ensure the needs of the community into the future can be met. Long term quality jobs will best support communities into the future, and the ASU looks forward to working with the Government and the Department to implement 5-year funding terms for community sector programs.

## 6. Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** The Commonwealth Government must implement long term funding cycles for the community sector.

**Recommendation 2:** The Commonwealth Government must implement long term funding cycles with a corresponding commitment from Government and requirement on employers to ensure long term funding is used to create secure, ongoing jobs with good conditions.

**Recommendation 3:** The Commonwealth Government's procurement standards to be set out via the Australian Jobs Code must apply to social, community and disability services funded by government.

**Recommendation 4:** In rolling out these changes, the Commonwealth Government must work with the ASU and with the community sector to ensure no worker goes backward. It should be a term of any new contracts or of ongoing funding that the workforce conditions are maintained.

**Recommendation 5:** The Department must work with the ASU and community organisations to ensure that any additional reporting is undertaken by workers on paid time. Funding must be increased where reporting standards could only be achieved by unpaid overtime.

**Recommendation 6:** The Commonwealth Government must work with the ASU to ensure that responsibility is not shifted to individual workers for reporting standards in circumstances where it was not structurally possible to meet the standards.

**Recommendation 7:** The Department should work with the ASU to determine the true cost for community service. This cost should form a minimum floor that is established before tendering/grant processes and becomes a term of contracting.

**Recommendation 8:** The Government must commit to contract only to not-for-profit organisation. For profit organisations should receive no government community funding.

**Recommendation 9:** No community disruption must be a key principle in altering Departmental funding processes.

**Recommendation 10:** The Commonwealth Government must ensure that changes to funding pools does not privilege one type of size of organisation over another. Specialist services and services tailored to specific communities must continue to be supported.

**Recommendation 11:** The Commonwealth Government must ensure that in protecting community-based organisations through funding arrangement changes, volunteers are not being relied on to do the work of paid staff.

**Recommendation 12:** Community based organisations must continue to be supported, and the Department should provide opportunities for collaboration to share resources and provide career opportunities for community workers.

**Recommendation 13:** The Department should undertake workforce planning and development, in consultation with the ASU. Skills development and recognition should be a core part of this work and build off the work of JSA.

**Recommendation 14:** The Commonwealth Government should review industrial legislation to ensure it allows for the Department to require new providers recognise continuity of employment and continuity of conditions.