



Senate Inquiry into Poverty in Australia

21 February 2023

About Social Futures

Social Futures is a leading social services organisation in Regional NSW, providing vital support to people who need it most. With 47 years' experience, Social Futures has offices across Western, Far West, Central Coast, Hunter and the North Coast, connecting regional people to the support they need when they need it. The organisation is a major service provider across homelessness, employment, youth and family service, mental health and disability inclusion.

Over the past 4 years, our region has faced COVID, bushfires, and multiple catastrophic flooding events. Whilst these events have undoubtedly increased the challenges many in our region face, the challenges are not new.

Recommendations

Australian Federal and State Governments need to:

HOUSING

1. Urgent investment in social and affordable housing
2. Direct investment through not-for-profit providers, rather than private developers. The private market has not delivered in our communities.
3. Urge bi-partisan support for Housing Future Fund
4. Direct funding to areas of high need particularly regional areas where there is chronic undersupply of affordable and social housing

INCOME

1. Increase the rate of government support payments
2. Raise the minimum wage
3. Reduce barriers to access income support and broaden access
4. Invest in early intervention programs for young people from families with entrenched unemployment

NATURAL DISASTER

1. Simplify and expediate the process for people to access financial supports following natural disasters.
2. Rehouse displaced people urgently after disasters, and work with communities and local governments on remediation and disaster mitigation actions for housing in high-risk locations (respecting connection to community and Country).

HEALTH

1. More funding into mental health supports for people with mild-moderate mental health to address wellbeing before it deteriorates to a stage where it impacts livelihood.