

State and Federal governments accused of deserting young people



Youth services at crisis point

Menios Constantinou and Rob Bates

THOUSANDS of homeless, drug-addicted and disadvantaged teenagers from Woolloomooloo to Botany Bay could be left in the lurch if government funding is axed for two successful youth assistance projects.

Waverley Action for Youth Services (WAYS) has lost \$1.8 million in federal funding and the Kings Cross Youth At Risk Project could have its state government funding suspended from next month.

The battle to save WAYS reached a climax last week as about 60 protesters rallied outside the office of the federal MP for Kingsford Smith, Peter

Garrett. Chanting slogans like "Save WAYS" and "Shame Peter, shame", the crowd gathered to protest against the Federal Government's recent decision to axe the funding.

WAYS chief executive officer Russell King said Mr Garrett had refused to help them fight the decision. "We will be forced to close down our service here and we've applied to Mr Garrett repeatedly and had absolutely no joy, help or consideration of our problem," Mr King said.

Among the crowd of WAYS staff, clients and supporters were Waverley mayor Sally Betts, Randwick mayor Bruce Notley-Smith, Liberal MLC Don Harwin and several councillors, some

of whom were chanting and holding placards.

One of the more vocal protesters, Danielle Arlie, 16, said she had used WAYS for as long as she could remember.

"They've helped me get into school, they've helped me get accommodation, they've helped me with a lot of things," Ms Arlie said.

"When you go into WAYS it's like you know them and you're talking to them as if they're a friend. We won't have anywhere to go because we don't want to speak to people that don't know us."

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