



the Department of Social Services  
Submission 2  
**BELLINGEN NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE**

Hyde Street, (P.O. Box 204) BELLINGEN N.S.W. 2454  
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www.bnc.org.au

**Incorporated**  
A.B.N. 53 291 058 524

Senator Rachel Siewert

#### DSS Funding – Emergency Relief

The Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre Inc. applied for an Emergency Relief grant under the Families and Communities Programme through the DSS New Way of Working for Grants on 18 July, 2014.

The Neighbourhood Centre has been operating an Emergency Relief scheme since 1984. Firstly, as a community funded scheme through a barter system. It was later funded and for over the past 10 years funded through Federal Government grants.

We have since 2011/12 received \$23,912 per annum, we were advised early 2014 that we would receive 6 months funding for the 2014/15 year and would need to apply for ongoing funding through the DSS New Way of Working for Grants. For the 6 months period we were granted \$13,152.00 for the emergency relief programme. The funding is to provide support to low income earners with food, fuel, or crisis accommodation. Bellingen Neighbourhood Centre takes less than 1% of the funding for admin costs. We see the need of the clients to be more urgent than using the funding for large administrative costs. The program is operated by volunteers, and the Manager, who offer a five day a week service.

The application was submitted with an increase to the budget to \$25,000 in the first year followed over the next five years with a increase to meet the ever increasing need for support. The Neighbourhood Centre has seen an ever-increasing need to assist the clients more than just to provide a voucher so we now provide a counselling service and a budgeting service both free.

We also have seen a further need for the clients and are setting up a case management service, to assist them to get through the rough times and move back into a better life. We did ask for funding for a case manager position within the grant application. This was a part time position to work with the clients that need further assistance.

We were advised on 24<sup>th</sup> October that the process had been put back two months and that we had been granted on going funding until the end of February, 2015. The start date for the new providers would then be the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2015.

We were advised on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2014 that we were not successful. I replied and asked for negotiations in an endeavour to find out more about the process but was given a web site that would give feedback. This proved to be generic and of little help

I emailed the Department on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2015 asking for consultation about the funding and being declined. As a backup position, I asked the name of the successful provider so I could talk to them with the view of sub contracting the grant within the Bellingen area. I was advised that the information would be provided once the successful provider had finished negotiations with the Department. I asked the same questions on four more occasions over the month, always with the same reply.



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On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2015 I was advised of the Ministers statement again putting the process back a further month and offering existing providers a months transition funding, until the 30<sup>th</sup> of March.

I have again asked for the name of the successful provider only to be told I would be given that information once negotiation had been completed.

The process from the start appeared to be aimed at large organisations leaving the small community based non for profit group, like the Bellinghen Neighbourhood Centre, in a no win situation. I have been proved right, unfortunately.

The Bellinghen Neighbourhood Centre has proved it can provide the service on a daily basis. We are the only organisation in Bellinghen that provide this service along with counselling, financial budgeting and case management support along with referring and advocating to Government Departments or organisations five days a week.

We provide services free of charge. Some of the programs are funded, others partially funded (both Federal and State funding) others are programs the Government have asked us to do without any funding. There are a number unfunded that are staffed by volunteers and the Neighbourhood Centre meet any of on costs. Most services are staffed by volunteers (25 volunteers work at the Centre weekly) and have been developed by the Neighbourhood Centre to meet the needs of the clients. All our programs are geared to compliment each other with the Emergency Relief as one of the major factors in the Neighbourhood Centre.

The process for the funding was unclear, the outcome was unexpected, the explanation of the funding outcome was insufficient and the follow up explanation has provided no results to assist us into the future.

This small community, small organisation will suffer in to the future due to lack of consultation, lack of follow up information and an unclear outcome.

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