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MEDIA RELEASE

Forbes DV service to miss out on extra domestic violence workers

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes (CCWF), the service responsible for assisting women fleeing domestic violence in Forbes NSW, has been barred by the NSW government from applying for additional funds to boost its domestic violence workforce in the town.

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice has issued an invitation to tender for the New Specialist – Family Domestic & Sexual Violence workers – National Partnership Agreement, which aims to boost the domestic violence workforce across NSW.

CCWF, which operates across 400,000 square kilometres in regional and remote Western NSW, will not be allowed to compete for these funds in the locations where it currently delivers domestic violence support to women and children fleeing violent situations.

These include the LGAs of Forbes, Parkes, Bourke and Lachlan where it currently delivers the existing Specialist Homelessness Services and Staying Home Leaving Violence programs.

This is despite the Forbes and Parkes services consistently assisting twice as many women and children as they are funded to do.

“This decision by the NSW government is so disappointing,” CCWF CEO Anne-Marie Mioche said.

“My team is constantly stretched, we really need those extra workers, the money has been made available by the Commonwealth government and yet we are told we cannot make a bid for it.

“We need those extra workers, and it isn’t an exaggeration to say women’s lives are at risk.

“We have sought an explanation for the decision, but the Department of Communities and Justice will not tell us and other concerned providers what the reasons behind their decision is until after they have allocated the funds, which will be too late to change anything.”

In a cruel twist the Department has told CCWF it can apply for funding in areas where it has no services and which are hundreds of kilometres from its closest domestic violence services locations.

“What I am puzzled about is whilst we are not allowed to compete for funds where we operate domestic violence services in places like Forbes and Bourke we have been given permission to apply for funds in places like the Snowy valley and Coonabarabran,” Ms Mioche said.

“How on earth are we going to be able to help these women when our two refuges are in Forbes and Bourke and our teams are as much as 900 kilometres away?”.

“We are not the only provider affected by this funding approach; I have been contacted by several other concerned services.

“It is a galling decision considering our footprint is already across 52 per cent of NSW that they have managed to ask us to bid for regions where we have no presence, and where there are no doubt very competent providers.

“They fund our current services how could they not know where we operate?”

“I am hoping they have made a mistake, or that someone failed geography because I feel like I am in an episode of *Yes Minister*.

“I would like the minister to withdraw this tender and re-release it allowing all organisations that provide domestic violence services to be allowed to bid for funds in the areas where they operate domestic violence services.

“I feel sure she can’t possibly be aware of what a mess has been made of this funding.

“Working in this field is stressful and we are constantly negotiating red tape and juggling with the decisions of multiple agencies.

“In the areas where we operate providing domestic violence services can be pretty scary, rural areas have more access to guns and we have had situations where we have had to wait several hours for the police to come to an event as they are so under-resourced out west.

“We need to ensure the system works for women and children and there is much room for improvement as we are seeing every second day in the national news.”

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