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## Community sector workers must be prioritised in Essential Worker Housing

Community sector workers should receive the same housing benefits as health and emergency service personnel, according to Mallee Family Care (MFC), a leading community service organisation in the Mallee region.

MFC highlighted the importance of community sector workers in a submission to the NSW Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Essential Worker Housing, stressing that those who support vulnerable populations in rural and regional areas must not be overlooked in any future housing schemes.

“As the backbone of our communities, essential workers need secure, affordable housing, and that includes community sector staff who provide critical services to those most in need,” MFC CEO Teresa Jayet said.

“MFC supports a comprehensive definition of ‘essential worker’ that goes beyond healthcare and emergency services. Workers in the community sector have played an invaluable role, particularly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, yet they are often overlooked from initiatives aimed at supporting essential workers,” Ms Jayet continued.

In its submission to the Select Committee, MFC argued that essential worker housing policies should be developed in consultation with communities, particularly in rural and regional areas where the lack of affordable housing is most acute. MFC advocates for a place-based, community-led approach to housing that recognises the unique challenges faced by these areas.

“Regional areas have unique needs when it comes to essential workers, and housing solutions must be tailored to meet the specific demands of these workers and their communities. The high cost and limited availability of housing in these areas has already made it difficult to attract and retain essential workers, which exacerbates existing service delivery shortages. It is therefore crucial that essential workers in regional communities have equal access to any proposed housing solutions,” Ms Jayet said.

MFC’s submission also recommends exploring innovative housing solutions tailored to the needs of regional and rural areas. This includes a proposal for increased use of public land, employer-developed housing and long-term affordability models.

“MFC is ready to contribute to a co-designed process that brings together local voices to create effective and sustainable housing solutions. Our goal is to ensure that every essential worker, no matter where they live in NSW, has access to the safe and secure housing they deserve.”



### Media enquiries

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### About Mallee Family Care

Mallee Family Care is a dedicated, place-based community service organisation that has been supporting the regional, rural, and remote communities of northwest Victoria and far west New South Wales since 1979. With more than 300 staff delivering over 70 programs, MFC supports thousands across the Mallee region, providing vital services in areas such as family and child support, mental health, housing, legal assistance, disability services, and more.



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