



18 March 2020

Hon Gareth Ward MP
Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Minister

**PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR PAID SPECIAL LEAVE FOR
COMMUNITY SERVICE WORKERS IN NSW GOVERNMENT FUNDED SERVICES**

I commend the NSW Government on its decision to provide NSW health workers with up to 20 days paid special leave in respect of COVID-19 in the following circumstances:

- Self-isolating due to travel or close contact COVID-19 exposure;
- Caring for sick family members;
- Caring for family members due to closure of school/day-care; and/ or
- Unable to attend work due to transport disruptions or workplace closure.

Like workers in health, community sector workers provide essential, frontline services which must continue to be provided during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The NSW Government is responsible for funding a wide array of non-Government community services including; family, youth and child protection services; homelessness, housing and tenancy services; neighbourhood centres; migrant and settlement services; community legal centres; peaks and advocacy organisations; community mental health and drug and alcohol services; women's services; Aboriginal services; some community aged care services.

The NSW Government relies on the community sector to provide these services on its behalf. We believe that the Government needs to extend to these workers, the same provisions that it has provided to health workers. Additional funding for paid special leave must be made available to community sector organisations to ensure they can meet their obligations to provide continuity of care during these extraordinary circumstances.

Workers in the sector, particularly those who work with communities who are especially vulnerable to Covid-19, must be able to exercise a positive duty of care where self-isolation is required. These workers are also just as likely as their public sector counterparts to be required to provide care to family members or affected by workforce closures, transport disruptions or workplace closures.

Given the essential nature of the work performed by the community sector, and its reliance on Government funding to provide this work, we ask that the Government immediately make available additional funding for the provision of paid special leave, in line with what it has provided to NSW health workers.

As organisations are currently putting in place their continuity of service plans, and front-line workers are responding every day to the needs of the community – there is a great deal of urgency in dealing with this matter. The sector and the workforce cannot afford to have any funding or income uncertainty at this crucial point in time. I respectfully request that you give this request the serious and urgent consideration that it warrants and provide a response as a matter of urgency.

When the community of NSW need our essential community services, our members are there for them. We cannot afford to have service disruptions as a result of workers not having access to paid special leave putting the health and safety of the workforce and community whom they support at risk. Please, at this crucial time can the NSW government be there for these essential front-line workers.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Natalie Lang', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Natalie Lang
Branch Secretary