MEDIA RELEASE

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VICTORY FOR TRANSPARENCY IN SPECIALIST REFUGE FUNDING SAGA

The NSW Upper House has forced the Liberal Government to release all documents relating to its controversial Going Home, Staying Home tender process, following community outcry over the closure of many specialist homelessness shelters as a result of the new process.

The Liberals’ restructure of refuges has seen funding for over 80 specialist homelessness service providers across NSW cut – depriving women and children who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault a safe haven from these horrendous acts.

When the results of the Going Home, Staying Home tenders were finally announced, 336 specialist homelessness services were consolidated into 149 new service packages led by 69 non-government organisations, forcing many well-established services to close their doors.

After community backlash, the Government was forced into an embarrassing back down and temporarily restored funding to some services slated for closure – using federal government funding through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH).

“This move to force the Liberals to release all documents is a clear win for all concerned – finally the lid will be lifted on this botched process,” Shadow Minister for Family and Community Services Linda Burney said.

“The Liberals are clearly raiding NPAH to fund this band-aid, short term fix – but unfortunately it won’t do. Many services funded under the rescue package still face closure by December 2015, leaving their fate under a cloud of doubt.

“Let’s be clear - the Liberals have weaselled their way around the truth throughout this whole process. First they said all government properties would remain open – another way of saying that many existing, experienced service providers would be kicked out of those properties.

“Then they said services would not change, despite the new service providers. But we know that in some areas, shelters are no longer open 24 hours a day, or have simply closed all together.

“It’s about time we got to the bottom of this bungled process once and for all.”

Shadow Minister for Women Sophie Cotsis said: “This is a victory for transparency and accountability. This botched tender process saw specialist services close, over 400 job losses, and a loss of accessible refuges in regional areas.”

“Only after massive community outcry did the Liberals suddenly discover some additional funds, rewrote some contracts and reopened finalised tenders. The question is why was this process so flawed?

“The community deserves to see how this tender was conducted and the damage the Government has done. These documents will also greatly assist the Ombudsman in his review of the bungled tender.”

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