



## MEDIA RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

5<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### **MEALS ON WHEELS SERVICES IN NSW FORGOTTEN IN RECENT GOVERNMENT “FUNDING BOOST” FOR MEAL PROVIDERS ACROSS AUSTRALIA**

Whilst Meals on Wheels services in NSW have spent the last week activating their COVID-19 plans to ensure safe meal delivery to those most vulnerable in the community, uncertainty lingers in local communities across the State seeking to gain assurance that they will remain viable and will be adequately funded now and into the future.

In the media release announcing a “funding boost” set to benefit Meals on Wheels across Australia dated 18 May 2021 with the headline ‘Nod to volunteers as meal providers receive a funding boost’ Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care Services, said “This vital measure puts the health and wellbeing of older Australians first, while strengthening the viability of meal providers across the country”.

One important piece of information was omitted from the abovementioned media release – Meals on Wheels services in NSW cater for 40% of Meals on Wheels clients nationally, with 148 Meals on Wheels services in NSW who collectively deliver over 4.5million meals each year utilising 14,000 Volunteers, are not set to gain from the “funding boost” announcement.

“Meals on Wheels services in NSW are disheartened and require clarification from Government regarding this announcement. The Meals on Wheels local services are at the forefront of their local communities and go above and beyond, delivering not only nourishing meals that meet the National Meal Guidelines for ageing Australians, but also social interaction, combatting loneliness, wellness checks, security and peace of mind for loved ones and family members, knowing a friendly Volunteer is visiting their parent or grandparent and checking they are OK” said Les MacDonald, CEO of Meals on Wheels NSW, peak body representing the Meals on Wheels services in NSW.

“We need clarity from Government that funding for Meals on Wheels services in NSW is not going to drop to a lower funding level of \$7.50 in 2022 as this will have serious consequences for Older Australians living in NSW and for our organisation. The structure of Meals on Wheels in our State varies significantly to other States due to an operating model imposed on our organisation in NSW some 20 years ago by the NSW State Government. The cost of living in NSW is much higher than other States, we have a higher number of paid staff within our services and having ‘one size fits all funding’ for Meals on Wheels nationally will largely eliminate the ‘more than just a meal’ component of our service which for many is priceless.



In addition to uncertainty around sustaining (at a minimum) existing local funding agreements, Meals on Wheels in NSW are also seeking exemption to transitioning to “Payment in Arrears” due to come into effect in 22/23 financial year for “most” Commonwealth Home Support Programme funded services.

“Currently, Meals on Wheels services are block funded quarterly in advance. Based on a survey conducted with Meals on Wheels services in NSW in May 2021, 68% have indicated clearly that they will not survive, and 14% are unsure if they would survive in their current form if moved to a payment in arrears system. Due to long term inadequate funding, most Meals on Wheels services in NSW have no financial buffer and depend on receiving funding in advance. The Government accepted the Royal Commission recommendation to continue with a combination of activity-based and block grant funding to deliver its meal services. To properly sustain Meals on Wheels services in NSW, they should continue to be block funded in advance” Les MacDonald said.

Meals on Wheels NSW is encouraging all members of the community, community groups and businesses to get behind their local Meals on Wheels service and advocate for better funding and certainty so that they remain viable now and into the future.

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*Please contact your local Meals on Wheels service provider to find out how these issues are affecting them at a local level. To locate your nearest Meals on Wheels service, visit our website at: [NSW Meals on Wheels - Find a meal](#)*

