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MEDIA RELEASE

LOCAL CHARITIES FEEL THE PINCH AS GFC HITS SUPPORT SERVICES ACROSS QUEENSLAND

Sunshine Coast charities and support services were among those significantly impacted by the Global Financial Crisis, with homelessness and children's services among those hit hard. Local children's charity, SunnyKids reports that they had to turn away over 50% of referrals and that even then services for the past year operated at 112% capacity.

The Australian Council of Social Services community sector survey released today reveals the impact of the global financial crisis on community services struggling to meet the needs of disadvantaged Queenslanders. According to SunnyKids CEO, Chris Turner – "the survey results provide a good thumbnail sketch of the situation many Sunshine Coast families are in, however it probably only scratches the surface of the whole picture".

The survey of 583 community and welfare agencies shows organisations are under stress. One in ten Queenslanders looking for help is turned away. Of those turned away 44 per cent are seeking youth services and 35 per cent seeking financial support.

"The effects of the global economic crisis are reflected in the large numbers of people turned away," says QCOSS Director Jill Lang. "A significant effect of the downturn means there is a large increase in the unmet needs of young people and those looking for material or financial support.

"More than half of the organisations surveyed said they are unable to meet demand for services. And 61% are targeting their services more tightly to ration tight resources.

"It is encouraging the overall turn away figures have decreased by 16 per cent on the previous year. But agencies still turned away 263,922 people who were eligible for services.

Alarming, whilst overall turn away figures appear to have dropped – over demand on homelessness services continues to increase with the leading cause for referral being family breakdown and violence.





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"The report also highlights the needs of Indigenous people who are likely to use services because health and welfare outcomes for Indigenous people continue to be lower than for non-Indigenous Australians. Because there are a greater number of Indigenous people with a disability they are more than twice as likely to need help with core daily activities.

"Single parents are also significantly overrepresented as service users. These parents need greater support services such as income, housing, employment and social participation. The number of single parent households continues to increase. So providing services to single parents will take on increasing importance," says Jill.

The Australian Council of Social Service Australian Community Sector Survey provides an overview of the non-profit community services and welfare sector. QCOSS member organisations in Queensland were included in the survey. To find out more about the work of SunnyKids and other Sunshine Coast services, visit www.sunnykids.org.au.

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