

NEWS

## Funding crisis hits the most vulnerable



Hamish Broome | 1st Jul 2014 6:14 AM



THREE North Coast homelessness programs are set to close in October because the State Government failed to pass on \$1.5 million of Commonwealth money to fund them.

The closure comes despite the renewal of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness by the Federal Government, which via the state should have guaranteed our region an extra \$2.5 million to keep the programs going.

But the state government failed to stump the cash, instead only coughing up \$1 million in a separate increase.

The cut means funding for homelessness in the region has declined from \$8 million to \$6.5 million, according to chief executive of the Northern Rivers Social Development Council Tony Davies.

The 18% drop will see hard-pressed Northern NSW services coping with the lowest amount of money per client in the state.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, our region has 19.8% of all rough sleepers in the state, with overall homeless rates 25% higher than the state average.

Mr Davies said the NSW Government would claim the National Partnership Agreement funding was "transitional" only - but that contradicted what Prime Minister Tony Abbott said when he announced the renewal of the funding.

"Despite the fact there's been many poor Federal Budget decisions, when it comes to homelessness they actually did do the right thing," Mr Davies said.

"Bureaucrats... in Sydney can claim the money was never meant to be returned to services, but that's not what the Prime Minister said when he announced the renewal of funding.

"If the (State) Government hasn't renewed these services, what are they doing with the money?"

Mr Davies said the Minister for the North Coast Andrew Stoner had also told ABC Radio that there wouldn't be any reduction in homelessness funding for the region.

"The facts are that the total funding pool has declined, and great programs will be shutting down."

### Programs:

*Each of the following programs received glowing reviews from independent assessors:*