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# National survey shows increase in demand for services

Community services have experienced a sharp increase in demand according to the *Australian Community Sector Survey 2008* which was released today by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

The survey found a 6.3% increase in the number of people assisted by community service agencies between 2005-06 and 2006-07, accompanied by a 24% increase in the number of eligible people who were turned away from the services they needed.

**ACOSS Acting CEO Gregor Macfie said:** "Community services are under strain trying to meet the needs of disadvantaged and other Australians. Lack of resources meant 1 in every 25 people who accessed a service was turned away last year. People who needed housing assistance, family and legal advice found it particularly difficult to get these services."

"The survey shows that increased demand coupled with resource constraints leads to waiting lists, additional unpaid work by staff and volunteers and people being turned away from services.

Over 80% of agencies reported that the cost of delivering services was not matched by funding levels and more than 60% of agencies reported difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified staff."

**ACOSS President Lin Hatfield Dodds said:** "ACOSS welcomes the Federal Government's commitment to work with the community sector to deliver better services and outcomes for people through the Social Inclusion Agenda and the development of a Compact with the community sector. Reversing years of underinvestment in community services will take time, but it is important that the work start now."

### **Services with the highest percentage of eligible people turned away as a proportion of those assisted were:**

- Housing and homelessness services: 10,186 people turned away (1 person turned away for every 7 who received a service).
- Legal services: 4,213 people turned away (1 person in every 10).

The 725 respondents to the annual Australian Community Sector Survey were drawn from the membership of the State and Territory Councils of Social Service and ACOSS. Download the full report from [www.acoss.org.au](http://www.acoss.org.au).