

30 April 2024

Portable long service leave team  
NSW Government

Sent via email: [portableLSL@customerservice.nsw.gov.au](mailto:portableLSL@customerservice.nsw.gov.au)



Dear Portable long service leave team

**RE: Submission on the proposed *Community Services Sector (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2024***

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the proposed *Community Services Sector (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2024*.

ACON is NSW's leading health organisation specialising in community health, inclusion, and HIV responses for people of diverse sexualities and genders. Established in 1985, ACON works to create opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives.

The focus of ACON's core work and funding is programs for our communities to help meet the goals of the *NSW HIV Strategy 2021-2025*. In addition, ACON relies on a series of smaller, short-term grants to fund programs addressing a range of health areas including trans health, cancer, alcohol and other drug use, domestic and family violence, ageing, and mental health.

As an organisation, we often struggle to meet the ever-increasing demand from our communities for these specialised support services, but we are proud of the scale of services we offer, and of the number of community members we support.

We do a lot of meaningful work with the funding we have, but the scale of service output as well as the challenging nature of our work can, at times, cause distress for our employees. Over time, these pressures can result in elevated levels of stress and, in the worst cases, even burnout for our staff.

Unfortunately, limited, short-term funding, alongside soaring demand for our services, also means we are often unable to offer competitive salaries, or long-term positions to potential new recruits, which makes it difficult for our organisation to attract the best talent. Unfortunately, these factors mean our organisation suffers from a relatively high turnover of staff, an issue extremely common in the sector, and this represents a significant loss in cumulative expertise over time.

While ACON has extremely dedicated and hardworking staff who are passionate and driven by the positive impact of their work, it is common for our staff to move between roles in the community service sector, as well as into the public sector. But many who start their careers at ACON and go on to pursue other opportunities in the sector will lose their long service leave in the process. Those who come to ACON with invaluable experience from other organisations within the sector also face losing their long service leave in the transition.

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CFN/21473

A portable long service scheme would benefit the morale and wellbeing of staff if it allowed them to move more freely within the sector to improve their professional experience and advance their careers. ACON has a Long Service Leave scheme in place that offers benefits to those employed with us for 5 years or longer however, due to high turnover, our staff members often end up missing out on these benefits.

This loss effectively punishes workers financially for movement between organisations, even when this movement would ultimately contribute to an improvement in the overall professional standard of employees within the sector, and the quality of services delivered to the community.

Ensuring employees can maintain their long service leave when they move between organisations in the community service sector, would improve our ability to retain workers with invaluable expertise and experience within the sector.

We understand the scheme is for now only considering portable entitlements within the community services sector, but ACON would also support portable entitlements between the public and community service sectors.

When we can offer good benefits that reward commitment to the community within the sector, we can improve staff morale and reward our employees for their ongoing commitment to community service as a career. This would improve our ability to attract skilled professionals to the sector and make ACON, as an organisation, better able to compete for the best employees within the job market. Ultimately, this would have a positive impact on the quality of services delivered to the community.

For these reasons ACON strongly supports the introduction of a scheme that would allow for Long Service Leave to be a portable benefit within the community service sector. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me at [nparkhill@acon.org.au](mailto:nparkhill@acon.org.au) or on 0417 474 219.

Kind regards



Nicolas Parkhill AM  
**Chief Executive Officer**