

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Norlane community organization threatened with closure**

*Community programs jeopardized in Geelong's most disadvantaged suburb.*

Norlane, 30 November 2023 – An employment service in Victoria's most disadvantaged suburb is facing closure. State government funding for Northern Futures was not renewed in June's budget, leaving clients and staff with a bleak outlook for the new year.

Despite the support and actions of local members the Hon. Richard Marles MP, Ella George MP, and Christine Couzens MP, efforts at federal and state levels to secure funding have not been successful.

Northern Futures Board Chair Rob Birch said, "We work with some of Geelong's most disadvantaged communities, and we have a proven track record in helping people transform their lives. Our programs combine training and intensive mentoring to get people into jobs. But without immediate financial support we won't be able to run our training programs in 2024."

While the state government continues to fund a scaled-back employment services program in five areas of entrenched disadvantage in the state, Norlane is not on the list. In 2024 Northern Futures' only government funding will come via a contract with the Brotherhood of St Laurence for limited mentoring support services. These funds are insufficient for Northern Futures to continue operating in Norlane.

"Northern Futures urgently calls on the state government to recognize the entrenched disadvantage in Corio-Norlane, and to reconsider its decision not to renew Northern Futures' contracts. We call on the federal government to commit funding to a successful education-to-employment program" Mr. Birch said. "We also appeal to local businesses and philanthropic organizations to lend their support and help bridge the funding gap, ensuring the continuity of Northern Futures' vital programs and services."

### **Key data**

- Northern Futures has operated in Norlane since 2008.
- Northern Futures provides one-on-one intensive support to over 100 people each year, helping them to overcome multiple barriers to employment.
- 78% of people who completed Northern Futures training programs in 2022 found employment.
- Northern Futures held two Jobs Victoria employment services contracts totalling \$1.5 million that were not renewed in the 2023-2024 Victorian state budget.
- The unemployment rate in Corio-Norlane rose to 10.1% in June - nearly three times greater than the unemployment rate for Victoria.
- Norlane is Victoria's most disadvantaged area, according to 2021 census data.

### **Contact**

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