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**Federal Budget a missed opportunity to support the most marginalised:
Jesuit Social Services**

The 2020/21 Federal Budget, handed down last night, is a missed opportunity to support vulnerable Australians both through the COVID-19 pandemic and towards more positive futures, says Jesuit Social Services.

“This Budget has a strong emphasis on tax cuts for middle and high income earners who are already in stable and secure work, which will benefit millions of Australians, but not the Australians who are already on the margins and in need of support to maintain a basic standard of living,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“Every single person has been impacted by COVID-19, but we know the impact has been significantly felt among people who were already struggling to make ends meet, people with multiple and complex problems and people experiencing disadvantage. This Budget provided an opportunity to better help people on the margins through an extraordinarily challenging period in our history and ensure that they have the ability and opportunity to flourish on the other side.”

Ms Edwards says the Federal Government’s lack of clarity about a potential ongoing raise of Jobseeker payments will cause additional stress and uncertainty ahead of the December 31 end date of the Coronavirus supplement.

“For many people, this supplement has been the difference between being able to afford a roof over their head or put food on the table for their family. The base Jobseeker rate of just \$40 a day is not enough for anybody to live on so it is unacceptable that the Government may return people to that payment, let alone at a time when we will still be navigating our way through a pandemic.

“The lack of action around social housing, at a time of great need, is also deeply disappointing. It was recently estimated that over 727,000 new social dwellings will be required to address the shortfall in social housing over the next 20 years. The significant investment needed in this area could create employment opportunities and ensure more Australians have a safe place to call home.”

Jesuit Social Services welcomes increased funding for mental health services and increased access to Medicare-funded psychological services, additional funding for the NDIS and incentives for employers to hire people aged 16 to 35 who are currently receiving Jobseeker payments.

“These measures will undoubtedly assist some, which is positive, but overall this Budget represents a missed opportunity to ensure that our community’s most vulnerable members are supported not only through the pandemic but to our ‘COVID normal.’ We appreciate that this Budget has been delivered at a very difficult time given the economic and social impact of the pandemic, but our leaders need to do more to ensure all members of the community have the opportunity to live healthy, positive lives.”

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