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Federal Budget provides welcome support for some, leaves others behind

The 2021-22 Federal Budget makes some vital investments in mental health and the prevention of family violence, but leaves many vulnerable Australians behind particularly at a time when the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are still being felt, says Jesuit Social Services.

“This Federal Budget is a mixed bag that provides increased funding in key areas such as mental health, aged care reform and training and jobs but fails to improve the lives of people receiving income support, people in need of social housing and newly arrived communities,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“As Australia continues its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, our political leaders must be doing all they can to ensure that nobody is left behind.”

Federal funding will support state and territory governments to deliver aftercare services for people who have attempted suicide. Jesuit Social Services’ Support After Suicide program provides support including counselling, group support and online resources for people left behind after a loved one has taken their own life.

“We welcome these substantial announcements which, if implemented effectively, will save lives. We are also pleased to see that support to families, friends and communities impacted by suicide will be increased. We hope these investments can create much-needed positive change,” says Ms Edwards.

Jesuit Social Services also welcomes the funding boost to addressing family violence, including funds for financial and legal support services for victims.

“Through our Men’s Project, we work closely with community leaders including teachers and sports coaches to give them the language and skills they need to work effectively with boys and men. This grassroots work is vital in the prevention of harmful attitudes and behaviours, and we hope to see it recognised as an important part of the service mix.

“We will continue to advocate for a greater increase to the JobSeeker payment. Our program participants told us that the previous temporary Coronavirus supplement allowed them to purchase suitable winter clothes for the first time, and pay for essential medication.

“Newly arrived communities have also been subjected to cruel cuts to income support which should be immediately reversed, and this Budget does not help the plight of those detained in inhumane circumstances both onshore and offshore.

“This is a Budget that works for some Australians, but will prove harmful to others in a number of way. A fairer Budget will create a fairer Australia – and this Budget falls short in creating that”.

Media enquiries – Kathryn Kernohan, 0409 901 248 or kathryn.kernohan@jss.org.au