



Tuesday, May 8, 2018

BUDGET NOT REFLECTING GOOD WILL OF AUSTRALIANS, SAYS SAMARITANS

While last night's Federal Budget has revealed positive benefits for many Australians, local service provider Samaritans is concerned about outcomes proposed for Australia's most vulnerable people.

"There are indeed winners from the 2018 Budget, and these are largely from the election battlegrounds of middle-income families and older Australians," Samaritans Acting CEO, Brad Webb, said.

"The Budget promises tax relief to more than half of the voting population. This year's Budget was clearly positioned for an impending election. Whether the Budget will deliver its underlying aim remains to be seen," he said.

Of the funding announcements last night, Samaritans welcomes the commitment of the Turnbull Government to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It also welcomes the range of support packages for older Australians and the significant increase in mental health services and research.

However, Samaritans believes that the personal income tax cuts announced in the Budget have not captured public sentiment as to the importance of supporting vulnerable Australians who are most in need of our support.

["Yesterday's Guardian Essential Poll"](#) suggests that Australians are much more focused on a civil society, than on personal tax cuts. Compared to last year's poll, there has been a strong increase in the number of Australians calling for increased spending on assistance to the unemployed, more affordable housing, and assistance to the needy in Australia.

"This is our experience of the people in our local communities. Samaritans is fortunate to work with people who are interested and invested in supporting the more vulnerable members of our community and assisting them to make progress in their lives," Mr Webb said.

Samaritans is disappointed the Budget has missed opportunities to fund new affordable housing measures, and to increase benefits, particularly Newstart.

"The Government has not heard the repeated calls to support people who are living below the poverty line. Newstart is not a lifestyle choice - it barely covers the cost of basic essentials and this pressure is passed on to support services such as our Emergency Relief teams," Mr Webb said.

There were a number of other Budget measures that Samaritans expects will further disadvantage those most in need of support.

"The Budget has committed to penalising people on a Disability Support Pension by suspending it if they go to prison. We know at Samaritans that people need support coming out of prison to get

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their life back on track and reduce the chance they'll reoffend. These measures will see people trapped in an ongoing cycle of disadvantage," Mr Webb, said.

"Furthermore, a proposal to deduct fines from a person's social security payment – their only income to pay for housing, food and transport – will only increase hardship for people in families in already complex and challenging circumstances. We need continued investment in the services that prevent people from falling into these difficult situations, not punishing people into deeper poverty.

"As we head into elections in NSW and Federally, we reiterate our call to both Government and Opposition to consider the needs of all Australians in their policy and budget settings," he said.