

MEDIA RELEASE

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2023/24 Budget – The Good and the Not Good Enough

This year's federal budget represents is no doubt kinder for both the region's the region's hard working community services organisations and its many vulnerable individuals, families and communities and for, according to the Community Industry Group, the peak body for community services in southern NSW.

The Good

Community Industry Group is keen to recognise some key budget measures which will ease the pressure on both the not for profit sector and its diverse client base.

“It is pleasing to note budget announcements which will bring significant benefits to community organisations and their staff,” said Community Industry Group CEO, Nicky Sloan. “Government’s commitment to paying the full cost of the much-needed 15% increase for workers in the aged care sector, for example, will not only assist providers to increase the wages of their valuable employees, but will also help address gender pay inequality, as 85% of workers in this sector are women.”

Another pre-announced budget strategy which will benefit women predominantly is the restoration of the Parenting Payment for parents whose youngest child is under 14. “For single parents who do not have a job, the benefit of this initiative is life-changing” said Ms Sloan “It recognises the importance of child-raising as a valuable role, and relieves the stress and worry many parents have felt about how to feed, clothe and equip their children for school.”

Welcome help for low-income renters will be delivered in the form of a 15% increase in Commonwealth Rent Assistance, resulting in rental relief of around \$31 per fortnight. This will also provide a much-needed boost to Community Housing providers, as will new opportunities for lending for new development through the Housing Australia Future Fund.

“We will look forward to further information about the \$200m commitment to funding for place-based initiatives” Nicky Sloan stated “And are pleased that Government has made a \$590m commitment to the National Plan to End Violence Against Women, including the extension of the Escaping Violence Payment.”

The Not Good Enough

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There has been much speculation about the budget surplus, but Community Industry Group views the \$4.2bn surplus as a wasted opportunity to further improve the lives of our poorest citizens.

“The surplus reflects Australia’s strong economic position” Nicky Sloan said “But I can assure you that the surplus means nothing to the Mum living in her car trying to keep her family fed and warm. The surplus would be better spent on lifting more Australians out of poverty.”

“Of course, we welcome the \$40 per fortnight raise in the Jobseeker and Youth allowance, but it really represents just \$2.85 per day extra, clearly not enough to cover the increases in rent and food costs.” said Ms Sloan “It’s a disgrace that a wealthy country like Australia still has the lowest welfare rate in the OECD for people experiencing unemployment.”

About the Community Industry Group

Community Industry is the peak body working for community services and organisations in Southern NSW. It supports community organisations, promotes expertise and innovation in community development, fosters industry development and provides advocacy for social justice. Community Industry Group is an independent organisation governed by a committee of management elected annually by the membership.

Community Industry Group represents the non-government community services industry in the South East of NSW, which consists of approximately 300 organisations, and works closely with numerous organisations which provide support to vulnerable people across the region.