

Media Release

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Federal Budget Response: A lucky dip for vulnerable Australians

The Salvation Army has concerns that for Australians already living on the margins this year's federal budget will lead to greater hardship, despite positive new initiatives that will benefit some of the most disadvantaged people in the country.

The proposed changes to welfare services, namely the decision to introduce a demerit point system for welfare recipients is alarming. Territorial Director at The Salvation Army, Netty Horton, says these measures will likely exasperate demand on our services, which are already struggling to meet the high demand.

"People on welfare often have a range of complex needs that cannot be addressed through simplistic solutions. The introduction of compliance measures will lead to an increase in people accessing our services when income support is reduced or cancelled," Ms Horton said.

"More detail is required about measures related to participants with substance issues, as on the surface it appears punitive. It will be essential for the government to provide information to the sector about the details of some of these proposals and to hear the likely impacts."

The Salvation Army hopes critical funding for homelessness services and the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement will focus attention and opportunity to address the needs of the most vulnerable in our community.

"It is clear the government is concerned and thinking about opportunities for affordable housing across the community. However when it comes to disadvantaged people on very low incomes we know we will still require a substantial investment in order to significantly increase supply as well as address rental affordability," Ms Horton said.

"The Salvation Army is already providing 500,000 occasions of emergency relief to individuals and families across Australia every year, with rental stress becoming the defining issue at the frontline in recent years," Ms Horton said.

Similarly, The Salvation Army is pleased the Federal Government has listened to the concerns of the sector and allocated funding to support individuals, many of these people are at risk or experiencing homelessness, and are likely to fall through the gaps of the new NDIS and mental health services.

"We are urging State and Territory governments to match these funds to enable continuing support to these vulnerable people," Ms Horton said.

Additionally, The Federal Government's decision to ban gambling advertising during live sporting events before 8.30pm is encouraging and The Salvation Army is hopeful these measures are the first step in wide ranging reform to tackle the increase in program gambling.

The Salvation Army looks forward to continuing its work with state and federal governments in the year ahead to address the needs of Australia's most vulnerable.

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