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Cost of living crisis driving greater demand for support programs across the Mallee

Mallee Family Care (MFC), a leading provider of community services in the Mallee region, has urged the government to provide more cost of living relief for people in the community who are struggling to pay for fundamental needs like housing, healthcare, energy and food.

In a submission to the Senate Select Committee Inquiry on the Cost of Living, MFC highlights the pressures that the current cost of living crisis is having on communities in the Mallee region, and on the capacity of community organisations to meet increasing demand for assistance.

Ms Teresa Jayet, CEO, reported that while some relief has been provided to date, it has not been adequate nor targeted to support the most vulnerable members of the community.

“The cost of living crisis is impacting every facet of society, but disproportionately impacts our regional, rural and remote communities and groups within the community who are already experiencing financial difficulty,” Ms Jayet said.

“In the Mallee region, we continue to see surging prices for fresh food items, record-high transport costs and an increasingly unaffordable rental market.

“As a result, people are having to choose between paying for essentials like housing, health, food and utilities. We also see many examples of the unfair ‘poverty premium’ in our communities, where clients who are already financially disadvantaged are forced to pay more for essential goods and services, further entrenching them in financial difficulty.”

MFC has called on the government to address the underlying structural drivers of poverty, such as corporate profiteering, stagnant wages, inequitable housing policies, insecure employment conditions and an inadequate income support system.

“We know that income support payments across the board are inadequate, and often fail to provide even a baseline standard of living for recipients. This system is in urgent need of reform to permanently boost payments to alleviate financial strain and empower people to lift themselves out of financial difficulty,” Ms Jayet said.



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Charitable organisations and social services like MFC are also impacted by the current crisis, with escalating service delivery costs impacting the sector's capacity to provide vital services to society's most vulnerable people.

Ensuring that these services remain efficient, accessible and of the highest quality has become an ongoing – and increasingly complex – challenge.

“Communities need strong, accessible social service providers who can support them during hard times. We reiterate our previous calls to government to address the funding gap and increase support for community service organisations like MFC to ensure they can meet the increasing demand for service driven by this cost of living crisis,” Ms Jayet said.

A full copy of Mallee Family Care's Submission to the Senate Select Committee Inquiry on the Cost of Living is available at malleefamilycare.org.au

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