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## Federal Budget 24/25 a mixed bag - Mallee Family Care

Mallee Family Care, a place-based community service provider in the Mallee region, has described the 24/25 Federal Budget as “a mixed bag” for regional communities.

“As an organisation committed to supporting individuals and families facing economic and social challenges, Mallee Family Care (MFC) acknowledges the government's efforts to address pressing issues such as the cost of living, housing shortages and the climate crisis,” said MFC CEO Teresa Jayet.

“However, more comprehensive solutions are required to adequately meet the needs of vulnerable populations.”

Like many regional areas, Ms Jayet said the Mallee has been significantly impacted by the broader economic downturn and cost-of-living crisis.

“Demand for our services is rising as more households in our region find themselves struggling with compounding pressures of higher expenses and reduced opportunities for employment.

“We therefore welcome the additional funding in the Budget for the Financial Wellbeing and Capability Program which builds financial wellbeing, capability and resilience for vulnerable people and those most at risk of financial and social exclusion and disadvantage.

“We also welcome additional funding to support the National Legal Assistance Partnership and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, for our Community Legal Centre which provides vital advice and services for people experiencing family violence.”

Ms Jayet said support for the Remote Jobs Program was also a positive outcome of the Budget as it recognises the importance of supporting employment opportunities, especially in remote areas where unemployment rates are disproportionately high.

“However, MFC is disappointed that there was no increase in income support for the over one million people on JobSeeker and Youth Allowance, despite repeated calls from the community and welfare sectors for this measure.



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“The modest increase in rent assistance will make a small contribution to helping people on low incomes meet the rising cost of housing. However, is not sufficient to alleviate widespread housing stress in the context of broader cost-of-living pressures. Similarly, the additional funding for homelessness services and community housing is welcomed but falls short of addressing the acute shortage of affordable housing, particularly in regional areas.”

Mallee Family Care echoed community sector organisations’ disappointment that the \$300 energy bill rebate will be provided to the wealthiest Australians.

“In the context of the generous stage 3 tax cuts which disproportionately benefit the most affluent, we feel that this subsidy could have been better targeted. For example, the rebate could have been means-tested and a higher subsidy provided to people on low incomes living in areas, such as the Mallee, with an extreme climate and high energy costs,” Ms Jayet said.

“People with disabilities are a core client group for MFC and we welcome the Budget commitment to establish two new NDIS advisory committees as part of the response to the NDIS Review. In implementing these measures we stress the importance of representation from rural and regional service providers, to ensure these bodies can address the additional challenges faced by people with disabilities living outside major cities.

“As a place-based community service provider, MFC highlights the need for continued investment in strengthening the community sector's capacity to deliver on government objectives. We remain committed to collaborating with government and stakeholders to implement these Budget measures and working to address outstanding challenges facing individuals and families in the Mallee region,” Ms Jayet said.

**ENDS**



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