



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 21st February, 2020

POVERTY IN AUSTRALIA MUST BE ADDRESSED

The Chief Executive Officer of Mallee Family Care has today responded to the release of the *2020 Poverty in Australia Overview*, calling for immediate action to address what she calls the ‘shocking’ data around poverty and inequality in Australia.

“We live in one of the wealthier countries in the world and nationally, we’ve had a period of sustained economic growth yet we have 3.24 million people living below the poverty line. 17.7% of our country’s children are growing up in poverty and this has a lifetime of impacts, both for the children and the broader community.”

The data in the *Overview* shows that Australia is falling behind many of the world’s most prosperous nations, including New Zealand and Germany, and that there has been no improvement in the rates of poverty in Australia.

“We are leaving people behind. The job market is changing, jobs aren’t as secure as they once were and entry level positions are more difficult to find. Couple that with increased living costs and the rates of support systems, such as New Start and the Youth Allowance, remaining stagnant for 25 years and people are being locked into poverty.”

Ms. Jayet said that Mallee Family Care has long been advocating for an increase in the rates of income and other support payments, to better reflect the financial pressures being faced by people today.

In Australia, for a single person, the poverty line is considered to be income under \$457 per week. The New Start payment for a single adult falls below this by \$117 and the Youth Allowance by \$168.

“I challenge anyone to live on under \$400 a week – you might be able to survive but you cannot thrive,” Ms. Jayet says.

“A lot has changed over the last 25 years, the cost of housing has increased considerably, the cost of utilities, such as power, has gone up, as have the costs of all our services.



For all media enquiries:

Kirsten Lloyd | Communications & Marketing Co-ordinator

T: 03 5023 5966 **M:** 0459 020 665

E: klloyd@malleefamilycare.com.au



“The Government must act to lift people out of poverty and they can have an immediate impact by raising the rate of New Start and other income supports and by investing in social housing to ensure that all Australians have a safe and secure place to call home.”

Ms. Jayet says she is particularly concerned by the number of children living below the poverty line.

“We know that children have the best long term outcomes when they have access to education, health care and a stable home. If a child lives in poverty, it is difficult to break the cycle. They commonly don’t complete their education, find it hard to gain meaningful employment and are more prone to mental health issues.

“As a country it is clear that we must do better.”

ENDS



For all media enquiries:

Kirsten Lloyd | Communications & Marketing Co-ordinator

T: 03 5023 5966 **M:** 0459 020 665

E: klloyd@malleefamilycare.com.au