

Overview

The 2018-2019 Federal Budget was a missed opportunity to provide a decent standard of living for Australia’s most disadvantaged. The AASW was disappointed to see that this budget contains an expansion of the automated debt recovery scheme, the extension of the cashless debit card, a lengthening of the period before migrants can receive some welfare benefits and automatic deduction of fines for people on income support. These are all issues that the AASW has advocated against, highlighting the detrimental effect on people who are often the least able to bear them. There was also very little to address climate change, which will lead to more suffering for those most vulnerable. Furthermore, the AASW joins with many other community organisations and advocacy groups who are dismayed that there were no measures to address the housing and homelessness crisis, with federal spending in this area to drop to its lowest level in a decade. We can’t ignore the fact that the harshest and most punitive changes are directed squarely at the most vulnerable; they trap people in poverty and lock them out of work.

The AASW welcomes funding allocations to mental health and aged care, in particular, the initiatives that address the mental health of people in residential aged care, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and the support for people who are at risk of suicide. The AASW is keen to learn more about how all these measures will be implemented, and to working with the Government to ensure that they achieve the best possible outcomes for people. But we will continue to advocate for the human rights and social justice for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our community.

This document provides:

1. An analysis of what the AASW has advocated for in 2018 (see the AASW's [pre-budget submission](#)) and what was delivered in this latest budget.
2. An analysis of key budget measures and their relevance to social workers

1. AASW Advocacy and The Budget

AASW Recommendation 1	Relevant Budget Items	Impact
<p>Financial security and inadequate incomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lift immediately the rate at which Allowances for people of working age are paid to equal the amounts specified in the MIHL • Increase the rates of pensions, allowances and student payments, lower the income eligibility thresholds, relax waiting periods and decrease the taper rates to ensure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government will provide \$38.1 million over five years from 2017-18 for reforms to ABSTUDY for secondary school students (pg. 170) • The Government will achieve efficiencies of \$101.1 million over five years from 2017-18 by aligning eligibility for student payments for higher education courses with eligibility for the Higher Education Loan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absolute failure to increase the Newstart allowance will perpetuate the cycle of poverty, severe financial stress, inability to respond to emergencies, and inability to sustain an optimum level of health and well-being.

<p>that income support payments remain higher than the poverty line</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restore staffing levels within the sections of the public sector that have face-to-face contact with people on low incomes 	<p>Program (pg. 170).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The maximum payment suspension period available to Disability Support recipients who are imprisoned will be reduced from two years to 13 weeks, consistent with the suspension periods available to imprisoned recipients of other income support payments such as Newstart Allowance (pg. 171). The Government will establish a scheme to encourage lawful behaviour from income support recipients (pg. 172). 	
AASW Recommendation 2	Relevant Budget Items	Impact
<p>Economic participation and the Cashless Debit Card</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandon the compulsory cashless welfare card and instead implement initiatives that have been demonstrated to promote full economic, social and cultural participation Replace the current work-for-the-dole program and job preparation programs with a targeted strategy to identify workforce needs, and create effective pathways into meaningful work for all young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government will achieve savings of \$202.5 million over five years from 2017-18 by increasing the waiting period for newly arrived migrants to access certain welfare benefits from three years to four years (pg. 172). The Government will extend the cashless debit card trial in Ceduna (South Australia) and East Kimberley (Western Australia) for one year (pg. 173). The Government will reform the Community Development Program (CDP), redirecting funding of \$1.1 billion over four years (pg. 165). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extending the cashless debit card trials only promotes economic and social exclusion and undermines self-determination and agency.
AASW Recommendation 3	Relevant Budget Items	Impact

<p>Family violence and access to justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We call on the government to: Raise the level of funding for the family court to enable cases to be heard within reasonable time limits and employ more staff in roles that reduce the level of conflict within families Implement compulsory training for all staff in the family court to identify indicators of family violence and to ensure court processes prevent perpetrators from continuing to abuse their partners and children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guarantee future long-term funding for legal aid services, and ensure that all women who have experienced family violence receive adequate legal representation Commit funding to ensure that only professional workers who reach a certain standard of family violence training/qualification to write Family Court reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government will provide \$6.7 million in 2018-19 towards Domestic Violence Response Training as part of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (pg. 171). The Government will provide \$11.5 million over two years from 2018-19 to enhance the capacity of 1800RESPECT (pg. 173). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to address the issue of adequate funding of legal representation for survivors of family violence and matters of time limits highlights the need for continued advocacy in this area. Funding for 1800RESPECT builds on the 2016-17 Budget measure titled Domestic and Family Violence.
AASW Recommendation 4	Relevant Budget Items	Impact
<p>Medicare, mental health and services for older people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund and make mandatory the training of health and community care workers to recognise and respond to complex needs in older people such as poor mental health or elder abuse Ensure equitable access for older people with complex psychosocial needs to comprehensive support. This can be achieved by extending eligibility for rebatable Medicare services from an Accredited Mental Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government will provide funding of \$82.5 million over four years from 2018-19 for mental health services for people in residential aged care facilities The Government will provide \$22.0 million over five years from 2017-18 to protect the rights of older Australians and protect them from abuse (pg. 76) The Government will provide \$17.4 million over four years from 2018-19 to establish the Skills Checkpoint for Older Workers program, which will support employees aged 45-70 to remain in the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of mental supports for aged care residents to be provided by allied health staff including social workers. AASW has been advocating for this for a long time and great progress. Details are still being released Greater focus on rights of older Australians MBS to be amended- monitor the

<p>Social Worker so that it includes residents of aged care facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform the Medicare payment schedule so it is the same for Accredited Mental Health Social Worker and registered psychologists when carrying out the same work 	<p>workforce (pg. 91)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government will provide \$25.4 million over four years from 2018-19 for new and amended Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and Veterans' Benefits items (pg. 109) The Government will provide \$113.3 million over five years from 2017-18 for a new Integrated Carer Support Services model to provide a range of early intervention and preventative services for carers (pg.174) The Government will provide \$258.6 million over five years from 2017-18 to introduce a range of measures that will enhance the standard of living of older Australians (pg.175) The Government will provide an additional \$92.1 million over five years from 2017-18 to ensure continuity of support for people who are not eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), but are currently receiving support under programs that are transitioning to the NDIS (pg.176) 	<p>progress of these changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater support for carers Measures to be introduced to enhance start of living for older persons- monitor this progress Recognition of persons who are not eligible for the NDIS Issues around the Medicare payment schedule (equal pay for Accredited Mental Health Social Worker and registered psychologist) not addressed and to be an ongoing area of advocacy
AASW Recommendation 5	Relevant Budget Items	Impact
Housing and homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government will also provide \$0.2 million in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No mention of tax reform and housing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform the tax treatment of housing to remove distortions and improve affordability • Promote public and private investment in new affordable housing to address the shortfall in affordable housing stock • Increase the maximum rate and improve indexation of Commonwealth Rent Assistance to relieve rental stress • Reform tenancy protections to provide more security for people who rent 	<p>2018-19 to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to bring together all major housing and homelessness data in a user friendly dashboard (pg. 179)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government will provide \$550.0 million over five years from 2018-19 (including \$110.0 million in 2022-23) for a new five-year bilateral agreement with the Northern Territory Government on Remote Indigenous Housing (pg. 168) 	<p>affordability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No recommendations were addressed in the budget measures. This continues to be an area requiring further attention and advocacy • Results of data collection to be monitored and used for future action in this area
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2. Key Budget Measures and their Relevance to Social Workers

*Data from ACOSS: <http://www.acoss.org.au/budget-2018/>

Budget area	Measure*	Impact to social workers
Social Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No increase to Newstart, Youth Allowance and related payments • Plan to abolish the Energy Supplement remains in the Budget (cut of \$4.40 per week for new recipients of Newstart and Youth Allowance) • Several brutal measures, including garnishing of income support payments to pay state-based fines, making newly arrived migrants wait four years to access income support and subjecting Community Development Program participants to the harsh new compliance regime • Although \$50 million will be put toward reducing Centrelink call waiting times, the government will slash 1,280 jobs from the Department of Human Services by 2019. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct impact to the people we work with due to the lack of increase of Newstart and other payments, and the extension of the Robodebt • No increase in student payments does not address social work student poverty as identified in our research • We welcome the Centrelink call centre announcement but want see how we his is implemented and have concerns that it may be outsourced as per NDIS call centres • Social workers jobs at risk due to cut of \$1280 jobs from DHS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of Robodebt for three years (expected to recover \$300m in alleged debt) 	
Health and Aged Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New services for older people, including Homecare packages, residential aged care places and a sharper focus on aged care quality. However, significantly more needs to be done to meet demand • Significant mental health package, including new funding for Lifeline, new services for older people and funding for suicide prevention • Funding for National Mental Health Commission to monitor the implementation of 5th National Mental Health Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant funding increase for social workers and other allied health professionals to provide mental health services in residential aged care. • Greater investment in suicide prevention services, creating new employment opportunities for social workers. • Increasing opportunities for social workers under the 5th National Mental Health Plan, and welcomed announcement regarding funding for the NMHC.
Essential services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and company tax cuts mean that future funding for essential services, including the NDIS, is at risk • New money for continuity of support for people who are not eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is welcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax cuts impact investment in social services, this may have broad ramifications for all social workers • Social workers in the disability field will find greater resourcing available for the people they work with due to new budget measures

We will continue to provide further information on these measures and opportunities for social workers as they become available.

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