



Budget response: some support but gaps remain

Responding to the Federal Budget, the AASW is pleased that some workforce issues have been addressed, but is concerned at the lack of similar strategies across all relevant government-funded programs.

The AASW welcomes the requirement for social workers to meet mandatory ongoing mental health training requirements in order to participate in the Better Access to Mental Health Care program. Professional social workers already have to be accredited as specialist mental health social workers by the AASW to be registered with Medicare to provide psychological interventions to people with mental health issues under the Better Access program. The move to ensure that all professionals participating in this program undertake continuing professional development (CPD) is in line with existing AASW policy.

AASW CEO Kandie Allen-Kelly said, “All social workers accredited as specialist mental health social workers under the ‘Better Access’ Program have to successfully complete high levels of relevant professional education each year to maintain their accreditation. The AASW looks forward to working with the Government to ensure our highly trained members play a leading role in the delivery of mental health services to the community.”

Furthermore, social workers work in a wide range of settings with Australian families who are under stress or disadvantaged. Strategies and programs, such as the accreditation of community service professionals, are required across all Government-funded programs to ensure all Australians receive high quality community and public services.

“We’re disappointed that the Government has not seen fit to invest significant resources in building the capacity of the community sector and its workforce to respond to the growing needs of vulnerable Australians affected by the global economic downturn,” **said AASW National President Professor Bob Lonne.**

Other budget items of note to the social work profession include:

- The welcome increase in payments for aged pensioners, people on the disability support pension and carers. However, the AASW is disappointed that sole parents, recipients of youth allowance and jobless Australians do not receive a similar increase in their payments;
- The commitment to protecting children from abuse and neglect through a new national approach is welcome;
- The additional resources to address Indigenous disadvantage, which will be best addressed in partnership with Indigenous communities, is welcome.