

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

2012-2013 Federal Budget Brings Some Good News for Vulnerable Australians

The Australian Association of Social Workers is committed to creating a more just society. The AASW welcomes many of the initiatives announced by the Treasurer Wayne Swan in the 2012-2013 Federal Budget as contributing to greater equality and quality of life for many Australians, and enhanced work conditions for some of the health and community services who work with them.

AASW is delighted to see \$1 billion set aside for the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. This is a much needed initiative that is well overdue for Australians living with a disability and their families and carers.

We endorse the dental health initiatives that will enable greater access to dental care for vulnerable and low income Australians, including those living in rural and regional areas. We applaud the Government for enhancements to the family tax benefits and for the School Kids Bonuses that will enhance the educational opportunities for children in middle and low income families. We view the substantial enhancement of funding for in-home tutoring programs in up to 100 disadvantaged areas as an important initiative for creating a fairer Australia.

The contribution of \$6 million over four years for suicide prevention measures in the West Australian Kimberley is much needed and will help to address the tragedy of high suicide rates especially among young Aboriginal people in this region.

Aged care initiatives announced under this recent budget will also increase opportunities for home assistance and will enhance the pay and conditions of many service providers in this sector.

Despite the many positive initiatives in this budget, we are concerned about some gaps. We share the concern voiced by ACOSS about changes to parenting support payments for unemployed single parents that will leave these families \$60 a week worse off once their youngest child turns eight.

With the exception of the important suicide prevention initiative in the West Australian Kimberley region, we see no significant improvements to funding for mental health services. Aside from the initiatives in the aged and disability fields, there are no new initiatives aimed at improving the pay and conditions of the community service workforce, where many social workers practice.

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