



# Australian Council of Social Service

## Joint sector statement on budget social security changes

We, community sector organisations and leaders from around the country, have come together to express our deep concern about changes to social security payments currently being considered by the Federal Parliament.

We support a robust social safety net to protect people from poverty in the event that they are unable to support themselves due to unemployment, caring responsibilities, disability, incapacity or other unforeseen circumstances.

We recognise that most of us will rely on this safety net at some point in our lives, and reject the division between those who 'lift' and those who 'lean'. We all lift and lean at different points of our lives, sometimes simultaneously.

We understand the long term budget challenge the nation faces, with revenue declining and the needs of an ageing population increasing. For this reason, we support responsible reform to our tax and transfer systems to ensure we can maintain a robust system of supports and services into the future, for all of those who need them.

We are ready to partner with government in this reform process which we believe must be approached with care, equity and fairness and in dialogue with the community.

We oppose the unnecessary and harsh proposals in the Federal Budget, including the proposal to limit access to income support for young people to just 6 months a year. This represents a fundamental departure from the principle of basic support for all, in return for reasonable efforts to look for work. We fear that the policy will only serve to swell the numbers of those knocking on our doors seeking shelter, food, emergency relief and other support.

We believe that changes to pension indexation and family payments will erode the value of the payments over time and cause those relying on this support to fall behind community living standards. The proposed increase in the pension age will leave many older people languishing on the \$36 a day Newstart Payment for longer, increasing poverty among older members of our community.



We believe that children should be protected from poverty and that assistance to low income families with children should be increased. We know that the majority of children living in poverty in Australia are in sole parent families, already hit hard by a succession of cuts to payments. Proposed changes to Family Tax Benefit Part B will leave sole parents and their children in an even more precarious position and lead to an increase in child poverty.

We do not accept that these measures are necessary to achieve budget sustainability when fairer alternatives exist.

To this end, we ask our elected representatives to reject the following budget measures:

- The removal of income support for six months of the year for young people looking for work (see factsheet [here](#))
- The transfer of 22-24 year olds from the Newstart payment to the lower Youth Allowance (see factsheet [here](#))
- The indexation of pensions to CPI rather than wages including the Age Pension, Disability Support Pension, Carer Payment, Parenting Payment Single and Veterans Pensions (see factsheet [here](#))
- Changes to family payments which will reduce support to low income families, including sole parent families (see factsheet [here](#))
- Increasing the age pension age from 67-70 years, in the absence of any increase to Newstart (see factsheet [here](#))

We support sensible reform which appropriately targets assistance to those who most need it, including the following budget social security measures:

- Abolishing the Seniors Supplement and freezing the Age Pension asset test cut off, which will affect seniors with more than a million dollars in assets apart from the family home;
- Lowering income eligibility for Family Tax Benefit Part B from \$150,000 to \$100,000 which will affect those on higher incomes; and
- Including untaxed superannuation income in the income test for the Seniors Health Card, as it is for the Age Pension. This will only impact on those on higher incomes.

We hope that our elected leaders will choose a path which seeks to build the capacity and skills of those who are locked out of work, assist them to find work, and ensure all have adequate income to live with dignity.

Our Parliament has a choice between harmful and helpful action. We urge all elected members of parliament to reject current proposals which will reduce support to low



income and disadvantaged members of our community, including young people, sole parents, aged pensioners, people with a disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We invite them to instead partner with the community sector and other key sectors, including business and unions, so that together we can develop the fairest way forward. In this way we will build much needed community support for necessary reform to increase our revenue base and target government expenditure where it is needed to put our budget on a sustainable path for the future.

Endorsed by (current as of 12:15, 27 August 2014. For an updated version, go to [http://acoss.org.au/take\\_action/federal\\_budget\\_2014-15/joint\\_sector\\_statement\\_on\\_budget\\_social\\_security\\_changes/](http://acoss.org.au/take_action/federal_budget_2014-15/joint_sector_statement_on_budget_social_security_changes/)):

ACL Disability Services  
ACTCOSS  
Alliance of Philippine Community Organisations  
Anglicare Sydney  
Australian Buddhist Social Services  
Australian Catholic Social Justice Council  
Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS)  
Australian Council of Social Service  
Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO)  
Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (ACT)  
Australian Youth Affairs Coalition  
Ballina Shire Meals on Wheels Inc.  
Bankstown Area Multicultural Network Inc  
Baptist Care Australia  
BaptistCare NSW & ACT  
Benevolent Society  
Berry Street  
Bligh Park Community Services Inc.  
Blue Gum Housing  
Brotherhood of St Laurence  
Camden Community Centre  
Carers Australia  
CareWorks SA & NT  
CBB the not4profit people  
Children with Disability Australia  
Coast Centre for Seniors Inc.  
Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association  
Community Centres SA Inc.  
Community Compass  
Community Housing Federation of Australia (CHFA)  
Community Legal Centres NSW Inc. (CLCNSW)  
Community Youth Development Project  
Council of Single Mothers and their Children Victoria  
CREATE Foundation  
Dawn House Inc  
Disability Information Advocacy Service Inc. (DIAS)  
Fairfield Parent Support Centre  
Family Support Newcastle  
Financial Counselling Australia  
Gateway Family Services  
Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand  
Griffith Neighbourhood House Community Centre



Homelessness Australia  
Homelessness NSW  
Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre  
Jesuit Social Services  
Jobs Australia  
Junction Australia  
Justice, Ecology and Development Office (JEDO) in the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth  
Kooloora Community Centre  
Lutheran Community Care  
Marist Youth Care  
Melaleuca Refugee Centre Torture and Trauma Survivor's Service of the Northern Territory Inc.  
Mental Health Association NSW  
Mental Health Australia  
Mental Health Coalition of South Australia  
Mountains Community Resource Network (MCRN)  
National Association of Community Legal Centres Inc (NACLC)  
National Rural Health Alliance  
National Shelter  
NCOSS  
Newcastle Community Transport  
Northern Rivers Social Development Council  
Northside Community Service  
Nowra Family Support Service  
NSW Federation of Housing Associations Inc.  
NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA)  
NTCOSS  
People with Disability Australia  
Positive Support Network Inc.  
QCOSS  
Rockdale Community Services  
Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services  
SACOSS  
Samaritans  
Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association  
SCOA  
SDN Children's Services  
Sector Connect Inc.  
Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA)  
Settlement Services International  
Shelter NSW  
SHINE for Kids  
SHine SA  
Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre  
South West Child, Adolescent and Family Services  
Springwood Neighbourhood Centre Co-operative Ltd  
St John's Youth Services  
St Laurence Community Services Inc.  
St Vincent de Paul Society  
St Vincent de Paul Society Tasmania  
Step Out Community Access Services Inc.  
Sutherland Shire Community Transport  
TasCOSS  
Tasmanian Catholic Justice and Peace Commission  
Telopea Family Support  
Tenants' Union of NSW  
The Benevolent Society  
The Centre for Volunteering  
The Justice and Peace Office of the Sydney Catholic Archdiocese  
The Older Women's Network Australia  
The Rail Neighbourhood Association Incorporated  
Unity Housing Company



Vaughan Bowie and Associates  
Vision Australia  
VCOSS  
Volunteering Central Coast Inc.  
WACOSS  
Warrigal  
Wee Waa Community Care Service Inc.  
Western Sydney Community Forum  
Women's Legal Services NSW  
Yfoundations  
Youth Connections North Coast Inc.  
Youth Accommodation Information Network  
YWCA Australia  
YWCA Canberra  
YWCA of Darwin