



Media Release

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A thoughtful budget with more to do

People with Disability Australia (PWDA) welcomes tonight's budget as thoughtful overall - recognising the attention to NDIS and other targeted reforms, including education and skills measures, housing and women's safety.

PWDA praises a renewed attention to the NDIS. "The 17% rise to support costs and an increase in individual supports will see benefits flow to NDIS participants," said Samantha Connor, PWDA President. PWDA also welcomes the announcement of \$12.4 million to reduce the number of appeals and an additional \$21.2 million to support participants and their families with appeals. Along with funding to appoint 380 additional permanent frontline NDIS staff, this Budget has the potential to reduce some key stressors for people with disability who are NDIS participants.

Other positive announcements include 480,000 fee-free spots in vocational education and training, targeted to priority groups, including people with disability, First Nations people and job seekers. "Fee-free vocational education places are a step toward removing the affordability barrier people with disability face when training for meaningful careers," said Ms Connor. Additional funding of \$485.5 million to fund an additional 20,000 university places for students from under-represented and low socio-economic backgrounds will also help offset barriers for students with disability and other disadvantaged groups.

PWDA also welcomes the cost of living/health announcement that will see the decrease of the maximum co-payment under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) from \$42.50 to \$30 per script. "People with disability not only face rising cost of living pressures but also costs of disability, so relief in the

form of lower medication costs is welcome," said Carolyn Hodge, PWDA Deputy CEO.

However, PWDA is concerned about other health announcements. "While we welcome the provision of \$808.2 million in 2022-23 to extend elements of the Government's response to COVID-19 until 31 December 2022," said Ms Connor. "We hold concerns about the lack of targeted measures for people with disability and the cessation of the response. COVID is not over!"

The Housing Australia Future Fund will provide a welcome \$10 billion investment across State and Territories, including 20,000 new social housing dwelling and 4,000 for women and children impacted by family and domestic violence and older women at risk of homelessness. "With housing the number one issue in our disability advocacy services, we encourage all governments to ensure a continued focus on providing accessible social housing for people with disability - including safe, secure and accessible homes for women with disability escaping violence," said Ms Hodge.

One area of concern is the absence of serious reforms around income support for people with disability, especially those affected by the COVID pandemic. "Those already living in poverty will be disproportionately affected by higher interest rates, housing and energy costs," said Ms Connor. PWDA holds concerns that those most disproportionately affected by poverty will be further impacted by any impending economic crisis. "We welcome a small \$1,000 increase in the annual rate of the Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Payment for eligible disabled veterans to help with cost-of-living pressures, but recognise that this is not enough," Ms Connor said. "We will be looking for more from the next budget."

While the Government will provide \$630.4 million over four years from 2022-23 to strengthen Australia's resilience to disasters, there is no dedicated measure to ensure people with disability will be safe in climate emergencies and other disasters. PWDA calls upon government to ensure that targeted emergency preparedness measures are developed and implemented urgently. "We are facing an increasing number of emergencies and disasters each year and it is imperative that our responses are planned and tailored to the needs of people with disability," Ms Connor said.

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