

PRESS RELEASE

The Budget did not *quite* lose sight of those in need

If the Government heeded Baptist Care Australia's pre-budget call to approach the 2016-17 budget with a spirit of compassion and generosity to those in the Australian community most in need of Government support, it did so with an eye on the political consequences.

"This budget gives just enough to those most in need, and targets just sufficient higher income earners to rein in tax avoidance and contribute to the public purse, to avoid the charges levelled at the last budget of being unfair and unjust – only by the skin of its teeth," Baptist Care Australia's Executive Director Carolyn Kelshaw said.

The most positive moves are addressing higher-end superannuation tax concessions and redistributing them in a kind of Robin Hood move, along with changes to youth employment programs in an effort to seriously engage young people with the work force.

The biggest disappointment in tonight's federal budget is its half-hearted approach to homelessness and affordable housing. Two measures only are addressed: establishing a Compulsory Rent Deduction scheme for those on Income Support Payments or Family Tax Benefit in a move designed to head off consequences of rental debt; and keeping the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness for this current financial year, which falls well short of the additional five years called for by Baptist Care Australia in its pre-budget submission.

"There was certainly nothing to encourage service providers to run evidence-based pilot programs to refine service delivery to help end homelessness, as we had asked," Ms Kelshaw noted. "Given the government's own acknowledgement of the magnitude of the problem of homelessness this seems like a significant failure."

"We were concerned that when it comes to prioritising spending and savings, the priority must be to support those who can least support themselves. A deep cut in revenue to the Department of Social Services indicates this was not at all a high priority for this budget," she said.

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