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For Immediate Release

Samaritans' CEO Responds to Federal Budget

Samaritans CEO, Cec Shevels said last night's budget announcement would have little impact on numbers of people seeking assistance from Samaritans day by day.

In response to the federal government's budget announcement, Mr Shevels said he was an admirer of the way federal government had headed off the global financial crisis under potential blow out in unemployment, which in Australian history has always gone hand in hand with recessions.

"I appreciate the additional investment in skills training and new apprenticeships, however some people who are long term unemployed, or moving from a disability support pension need more targeted support, such as paid work experience. This option is lacking in today's labour markets in Australia," he said.

"Unemployment benefits continue to be considerably less than other benefits, which is difficult for people trapped in long term unemployment."

"Improvements to health care and aged care are welcome, but there is nothing in the budget for mental health or dental care."

Mr Shevels noted there is little in the budget for families struggling with young children.

"Samaritans is particularly concerned about losing important funding which provides support groups for two to three hundred grandparents in the Hunter who have become the full time carers of their grandchildren," he said.

According to Mr Shevels, another significant omission from the budget is additional resources to tackle homelessness.

"In the 2006 census, we were all shocked to learn there are 105,000 homeless people in Australia on any given night. My prediction is that in the next census in 2011, things will not have improved. The federal government has made a good start to address homelessness but more is needed, particularly during these difficult economic times," he said.

"In summary, although the government has done well in heading off the global financial crisis and its impact, the most disadvantaged members of our community will not gain much from the budget and we will continue to see more people struggling to find somewhere affordable to rent, and more people struggling to get by week by week."

Samaritans 2010 Winter Appeal was recently launched to offer support to the homeless in our local community. Donations can be made at www.samaritans.org.au or on 4960 7100.

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**For further details or an interview please contact
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