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## **No room for compassion in marginal campaign**

Following the final federal election party launch yesterday Anglicare Australia Executive Director Kasy Chambers described the campaign as one that has shown little interest in the most vulnerable members of our community.

“People on the margins of our society are still on the margins of this campaign” said Ms Chambers today.

“Other than the contested area of mental health, the interests of the most vulnerable people in our community have not featured in the advertising or rhetoric.

“Indeed, looking at the 44 media statements of two big parties over the first three weeks of the campaign, in only four could we find the words *disadvantage*, *vulnerable*, *marginalised* or *inclusive*. Clearly there has been no political imperative to be seen to address issues fundamental to a fair Australia.

“Then, starting last week we’ve seen a flurry of welfare related announcements which involved both carrots and sticks. What is skated over by the ALP, and ignored by the Coalition, is that people struggling with poverty and unemployment, who are disengaged from social systems, families and schools that have failed them, inevitably lead complex lives.

“What works for people in those situations is close engagement from services that respect them, not simply a whack with a stick or a couple of extra carrots.

“The national message about expecting nothing for nothing seems to extend to election promises if you are on the margins of society, and not in a marginal seat.

“The other side of the coin is the view of those people that this political conversation is more or less ignoring. We asked two different groups of our ‘clients’(one in Canberra and one in Adelaide) what they thought was important in this election, what would make a difference to them, and what they would say to the political leaders.

“Very few identified anything important happening in the campaign from their perspective, although many people identified issues, especially climate change and housing (and in SA the Murray River), where nothing is happening. What would make a difference to their lives they say would be access to housing, dentistry, community health services, a more adequate income and real support into work.

“These are not issues that have featured in this campaign. That is the disappointing feature of this election. The campaign advertising has been about fear, and has been directed to middle Australia. Everyone else has been cast as irrelevant.

“A society is judged by how it treats the most vulnerable. This election campaign would suggest that compassion is not important in Australia right now. I would hope to hear from the political leaders themselves how that is not the case” Ms Chambers said.

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This statement represents the views of Anglicare Australia, as the national peak body of the Anglicare network. It may not necessarily represent the views of the Anglican Church of Australia or the views of an individual member of the Anglicare Australia network. Authorised by Roland Manderson for ANGLICARE AUSTRALIA Jamieson House 43 Constitution Ave Reid ACT 2612 T: 02 6230 1775 [anglicare@anglicare.asn.au](mailto:anglicare@anglicare.asn.au) [www.anglicare.asn.au](http://www.anglicare.asn.au)