

## Anglicare Australia Budget night 'fast facts'

### **A national approach to protecting children at risk: \$63 million over four years**

This will address the National Framework for Child Protection published by Minister Macklin and agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on 29 April 2009.

Key national leadership projects include \$10 million over four years for those supporting continuous improvement in services to protect children. It will include the development of *National Standards for Out of Home Care*. These standards will ensure that all children whose parents cannot care for them will receive the quality care and support they need for their well-being now and into the future. National benchmarks will improve consistency and the quality of out-of-home care.

In addition there will be:

- Improved information sharing and data consistency to ensure that vulnerable children do not fall between the gaps.
- Workforce development projects to raise the capacity of all services working with families and children to identify children at risk.
- A national research agenda for child protection.

### **Communities for Children Plus: \$10 million over four years**

Eight integrated service delivery sites will be established across Australia, building on the Communities for Children model. This will focus on reducing child abuse and neglect in disadvantaged communities.

### **Enhanced access to child care for children at risk: \$3 million over four years.**

This will raise awareness of the special Child Care Benefit and its eligibility criteria, through the child care system and the Family Assistance Office. The \$3 million is to raise awareness, but will lead to expenditure on the benefit of \$38.4 million. This measure will provide child care for an additional 2,400 children each year.

## **Increase to the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) by \$5.3 million over four years**

The TILA will increase from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per person.

## **Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health: \$204.3 million in 2009-10**

This measure will improve health care in Indigenous communities and help close the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It includes

- \$131.1 million for remote primary health.
- \$58.3 million for eye and ear health care.
- \$11.0 million for dental care.
- \$3.8 million to improve pathology services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- \$131.1 million for remote primary health over three years for continued regional reform of remote Indigenous primary health care services in the Northern Territory.

Specific elements of the initiative include:

- Continuation of the Remote Area Health Corps, which will deliver and support more doctors, nurses and other health professionals.
- Completion of follow-up services for dental and ear, nose and throat conditions identified through the Northern Territory Emergency Response child health checks.
- Expansion of the current Mobile Outreach Service to respond to child abuse related trauma.
- Continuation of alcohol and other drug treatment and rehabilitation services.

## **Closing the Gap \$1.3 billion (including the \$200 million above)**

This is in addition to the Australian Government's \$3.6 billion investment through the COAG National Partnerships. With contributions from the states and territories, the Australian Government has committed \$4.6 billion over the next ten years to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

The Budget measures support the federal government's 'Closing the Gap' agenda in:

- Making a sustained investment in and undertaking fundamental reforms to improve delivery of government service.
- Resetting the relationship between Indigenous and other Australians through engagement and partnerships.

- Restoring personal responsibility at the individual level and expanding economic opportunities for Indigenous communities to reduce disadvantage and intergenerational poverty.
- Acting and intervening when circumstances demand.

Other measures include:

- Jobs and economic participation.
- Addressing disadvantage in remote Australia. Investments in Closing the Gap.
- Indigenous Remote Housing National Partnership.
- Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes National Partnership.
- Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership.
- Indigenous Remote Service Delivery National Partnership.
- Indigenous Economic Participation National Partnership.
- Native Title System additional \$50.1 million over four years.
- Strengthening Australia's Indigenous Visual Arts Sector \$10 million.
- Re-setting the Relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
- Giving the Sporting Chance Program \$10 million.
- \$5 million to establish ten new school-based sports academies across Australia, with a particular focus on improving the participation and engagement of girls in schooling.
- \$5 million to the Former Origin Greats (FOGS) to establish school-based academies with a focus on rugby league in Queensland and New South Wales.

### **Funding support for the child support agency: \$223.2 million over four years**

The agreement provides an extra \$223.2 million to maintain customer service standards and address the build-up of child support debt.

### **More Outside School Hours Care: \$9.3 million over four years**

There will be an additional 250 Outside School Hours Care places for teenagers with disability or serious medical conditions.

### **Disabilities and Carers**

Three million dollars has been allocated for a national disability parking permit scheme. The measure will establish nationally consistent eligibility criteria, entitlements and a national permit to replace more than 100 different parking permits across Australia. Around 800,000 people with disability will receive a new standardised parking permit that will be recognised nationally.

\$1.8 million has been allocated for a National Companion Card Scheme. This will build on the card already available in some states to allow the carers of people with disabilities to attend sporting and entertainment venues without the need to purchase a second ticket.

The participation requirements for income support for certain principal carer parents will change, at a cost of \$26.8 million. The changes will allow greater flexibility for principal carer parents by:

- allowing them to undertake activities to satisfy participation requirements;
- providing a break in such requirements over the Christmas /New Year holiday periods; and
- providing more ways of reporting earnings and participation efforts.

Four million dollars will allow Special Disability Trusts to be established. The measure was first introduced in 2006.

The government will also reform disability employment services from 1 March 2010, with funding of \$1.2 billion over four years. The Disability Employment Services regimen is a replacement for the Disability Employment Network and Vocational Rehabilitation Services programs. There will be an Employee Assistance Fund to support employers with broader access to workplace modifications and Auslan services.

There will be increases of \$32.49 per week for singles on the full rate of the Disability Support Pension (DSP). There will be an increase of \$10.14 per week combined for couples on the full rate. The total amount will comprise an increase in the base rate for single pensioners and a new Pension Supplement for all pensioners. The Impairment Tables used for assessing DSP will also be reassessed, opening the pension to approximately 1,500 previously ineligible people, but removing eligibility from approximately 6,500.

### **Emergency Relief funding: \$80.4 million to 30 June 2011**

The emergency relief budget in response to increased demand will be doubled.

### **Innovative Money Management: \$50 million to 30 June 2011**

This will apply to schemes such as matched saving accounts and no interest loans.

This measure will complement those already announced and funded, including the funding of a peak body for financial counsellors, and the development of tools and training for 50 new counsellors.

### **Paid parental leave: \$731 million**

This will be available for births or adoptions on or after 1 January 2011. It will cover 18 weeks and be paid at the federal minimum wage.

### **National Plan to reduce Violence against women and their children: \$55.2 million over four years**

This is re-directed funding from the Women's Safety Agenda programme. It will implement a number of initiatives to progress the National plan (released April 2009 - see FaHCSIA website for more details). The measure will include national online and telephone crisis support; counselling and referral services; a trial of respectful relationship programme in schools; a social change marketing campaign; research; and the continuation of the national Advisory Council on Violence against Women. In addition the government will work with state and territory governments to jointly progress other areas of the plan.

### **Reform of family payments savings: \$2.4 billion over the forward estimates**

There will be higher income thresholds for the payment of the Baby Bonus, Family Tax Benefit A and B dependency tax offsets will be frozen at current levels for three years. This will in effect decrease the number of people eligible at the higher end of the scale.

### **Pension reform: impact on public housing and aged care**

There will be considerable reform to the pension area, informed by the Pension Review Report (Harmer Review) and Retirement Incomes Report.

Headlines include:

- Increases to pensions for all 3.3 million age, disability and wife pensioners, carers and veteran income support recipients. Increases of \$32.49 for singles on the full rate and \$10.14 combined for couples each week, which will bring the single rate up to two thirds of the combined couple rate. The cost will be \$14.2 billion over four years.
- \$600 annual carer supplement for all Carer payment and Carer Allowance recipients.
- Creation of a pension supplement which rolls the current GST supplement allowance, pharmaceutical allowance, utilities allowance and telephone allowance into one payment.
- Increases in the pension age to 67 by 2023.

Those pensioners eligible for the increase in the aged pension who live in public housing or aged care accommodation will receive an extra \$10.09 per week to offset the proportion of the increase that will be paid in rent.

## **Education and training**

The federal government will provide \$436.9 million over four years to universities to support increased participation for students 'from low socio-economic status backgrounds'.

It will also provide \$2.5 million in 2009-10 to improve the existing estimator used in Centrelink, Family Assistance and Child Support calculations.

There will be income-contingent loans to state-subsidised diploma and advanced diploma students in Victoria.

Twenty-six million dollars will be provided for the Drought Assistance for Schools program for 12 months.

The government will provide \$7.2 million over four years from 2008-09 to conduct a pilot project assisting disadvantaged families by supporting at least one family member into employment and/or education.

\$28.2 million dollars will be spent over three years to provide 5,888 language, literacy and numeracy training places for adults 25 and over.

The government, in its budget statement on education, employment and workplace relations, has focussed on employees at risk, children and young people, local communities and future directions for higher education.

The budget introduces a Training Supplement which supports low skilled unemployed people on Newstart Allowance and Parenting Payment to undertake education and training. They will receive:

- An Education Entry Payment and Training and Learning Bonus (\$1158).
- A \$41.60 supplement a fortnight to study.
- Incentives to get access to appropriate training, including through the Productivity Places Program.

## **Employment services**

There will be \$298.5 million over four years to enable redundant workers to gain early access to employment services.

The Australian Government will provide \$6.8 million over four years to set up an **Employment Incentive Pilot** to support employment opportunities for up to a thousand Disability Support Pensioners. Employers will be eligible for an employment incentive of up to \$3,000 for each participant who is employed for a minimum of eight hours a week for 26 weeks.

As well, there will be \$298.5 million to provide intensive employment services to people recently made redundant. It has also put \$77.2 million into 10,000 new training places at Certificate Level III and above in the **Productivity Places Program**.

The new national employment system, **Job Services Australia**, will begin on 1 July 2009. About 140 providers will be contracted to deliver services. There will be about 110 subcontractor arrangements. The government proposes to have over 2000 sites across the country. It will invest \$4.9 billion over three years to provide 'the right mix of training, work experience, and other interventions to help job seekers, particularly the disadvantaged, obtain suitable employment'.

'**Fair Work Australia**' and the **Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman** will be established in every state and territory with a total commitment of \$966.5 million over four years. 'Fair Work Australia', beginning on 1 July 2009, will cost \$149.7 million and will streamline services 'to better meet the needs of employers and employees'.

## **Trade Training Centres in Schools**

There will be \$2.5 billion over ten years to establish Trade Training Centres in schools.

## **Health Hospitals**

The government will deliver on the healthcare agreement with the states and territories, providing \$64 billion in funding for public hospitals, with an emphasis on reducing pressures on emergency departments.

There will be \$1.5 billion over seven years to upgrade hospital and clinical training infrastructure.

A related measure is the investment in cancer treatment infrastructure. Of the \$2 billion package, \$1.3 billion is aimed at reducing the disparity in successful treatment between metropolitan patients and those in rural and remote areas.

There is a major investment of \$430 million over six years in workforce training and translating research into clinical practice. The translational research funding will go towards new medical research facilities and infrastructure in mental health, neurological disorders, child health, Indigenous health and medical bionics.

## **Medical workforce**

There will be a 35 per cent increase in the number of GP training places, and the role of nurse practitioners, with \$134 million over four years in a new Rural Health Workforce Strategy to attract medical practitioners to areas of need. More communities will become eligible for rural incentive payments to attract GPs. Retention payments will reflect the level of remoteness.

## **Indigenous health**

The budget also includes \$204 million to improve health care in Indigenous communities, of which \$131 million is earmarked for remote primary health care, \$58 million for eye and ear health and \$11 million for dental care. The primary health care initiatives include expansion of the mobile outreach service responding to child abuse related trauma, continuation of alcohol and other drugs treatment, rehabilitation services and continuation of the Rural Area Health Corps.

## **Budget savings**

Measures to ensure funding for the above services include capping benefits under the Extended Medicare Safety Net, including obstetrics and assisted reproduction technology where there is evidence of overcharging. Other services which will have benefits capped include cataract surgery and some other eye surgery procedures, hair transplants in the case of alopecia, and varicose vein treatment.

Some programs have fared less well. Rural mental health receives \$19.4 million in new funding (including \$7.5 million exclusively for psychological support to people affected by the Victorian bushfires). While this funding is welcome, it is less than the \$21 million allocated to sports anti-doping funding.

## **Private health insurance rebate**

As expected, the private health insurance rebate has been 'rebalanced', in the Government's term. The rebate reduction will apply in three tiers.

Couples on \$150,000 (singles \$75,000) will have the rebate reduced from 30 per cent to 20 per cent. The surcharge for avoiding private health insurance stays at one per cent. At \$180,000, a couple will get a 10 per cent rebate and a surcharge of 1.25 per cent.

For those on higher incomes — up to \$240,000 (\$120,000 for singles) — the rebate drops to 10 per cent. The surcharge rises to 1.5 per cent.

The rebates drop in equivalent stages for people 65 and over who now get rebates of 35 per cent and the over-70s who enjoy a 40 per cent discount.

### **Ageing and aged care**

The move to increase the single age pension by \$32.49 a week is welcome, as is the alteration to the aged care home daily charge to 84 per cent of the age pension — thus leaving aged care home residents with \$10.09 of the pension increase. It is not yet clear how this will affect couple age pensioners, whose joint pension increase is \$10.14.

The revised system also relies heavily on differential levels of grandfathering fees and charges for self-funded retirees and part-pensioners and promises to be administratively complex.

### **Conditional Adjustment Payment**

This will remain at current levels.

### **Home And Community Care**

Funding will be increased by \$2.8 billion.

### **Residential aged care income testing**

The 28-day delay in applying the income test has been abolished.

### **Aged Care Viability Supplement**

Funding will increase by \$14.8 million over two years.