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MEDIA RELEASE

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Federal Budget: working for a future we all believe in?

Anglicare Australia warned today that the Federal Government's Budget welfare changes would generate a flood of referrals to welfare agencies for emergency relief assistance.

Sue Leppert, Executive Director of Anglicare Australia, said that the positive measures in this year's budget have been overshadowed by changes that judge and punish those Australians most in need of support.

"This year's federal budget is a sad statement of the priorities of our society.

"It imperils the futures of people on low incomes – and their children – while heaping tax cuts on the very wealthy," Ms Leppert said.

"Cutting the social security payments of single parents and people with disabilities doesn't help them get a job, it just compounds their problems and transfers the burden of support to groups like the Anglicare agencies that are already struggling to meet demand."

Anglicare Australia believes that a healthy economy is one that advances the wellbeing of *all* Australians. In many ways, this year's budget does not advance wellbeing – and any so-called advances are certainly not fair:

Increased support to participate in work is welcome, but only beneficial if that work is meaningful, accessible and sufficiently paid. People need to be trained and provided with the skills employers want and supported with flexible child care, affordable health care and practical assistance like access to transport.

They need to ensure work fits into their other family, community and individual responsibilities. They also need to be encouraged, perhaps after years of discouragement.

When the welfare to work package requires that people already doing it tough must jump through impossible hoops – only to be punished when they don't – it undermines both economic security and wellbeing.

And a framework for the future that offers limited opportunities for the one in five children of today who still live in poverty is hardly moving us to an Australia we can all believe in.

"What does this budget do for the wealth of our nation? At first glance, quite a lot. What does it do for the wellbeing of our nation? Time will tell – and history may describe this period as one where the pulse of nation was evident not in its heart or soul, but in its hip pocket," Ms Leppert said. "The saying 'we know the cost of everything and the value of nothing' may well apply," Ms Leppert said.