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MEDIA RELEASE

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Minister's solution to complex issue too simplistic: Anglicare

The best way to provide for children is to help their parents find stability through secure housing, steady employment and to assist them in improving their parenting skills so they can help their children gain a good education and develop to their full potential, Anglicare Australia said today.

"We, like the Minister for Family and Community Services, Mr Mal Brough, and all Australians, are concerned about the needs of children," said Dr Ray Cleary, Chair of Anglicare Australia.

"More than 100 years of practical experience supporting families in need has shown us the best way to care for children is to provide a strong family environment and good role models.

"We fail to see how Mr Brough's plan will strengthen families and fear that it may in fact cause greater stress to those who are most disadvantaged in our community."

Dr Cleary says that some people already have money for rent, heating and power costs taken out by Centrelink before they receive their benefits and these people are often referred to Anglicare and other community agencies for emergency relief and other services as the money left over is insufficient to live on.

"If Mal Brough's plan is to proceed, how will it differ from existing case management arrangements and what criteria will be used to decide who's to be included in the voucher payment method?" asked Dr Cleary.

"How will families be able to remove themselves from these arrangements? Who are to be the deciders? Centrelink or community agency staff with experience supporting families in crisis?"

Dr Cleary says that Anglicare would welcome the opportunity to work with Mr Brough to ensure the best results for disadvantaged families and the wider community by building on the wisdom and experience to be found within the agencies.

"In the past we have picked up the pieces of failed government policies by providing a range of support services to the people whom much of society neglects or marginalises – the homeless, those with a mental illness, refugees and families in crisis.

"We would welcome the opportunity to be involved early in the process of developing this policy to achieve long lasting benefits for Australia's most vulnerable children and families. We are in for the long haul and have years of practical experience to offer the Minister in the further development of any child welfare policy," said Dr Cleary.