

MEDIA RELEASE

15 May 2024

Australians Face Funding Gaps in Federal Budget: AASW Advocates for More Reform

Snapshot of the 14 May Federal budget funding that will impact social workers and the broader community:

- \$1.6 billion over 11 years to provide paid practical placements for teaching, nursing, midwifery and social work students
- Funded mental health support will be delivered through a network of 61 Medicare mental health centres
- \$925 million over five years to establish the Leaving Violence Program
- 10% increase in rent assistance
- Lifting the earnings amount before jobseeker is reduced.

From the perspective of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), the budget allocations, including funding for paid practical placements, are a great step forward.

AASW Chief Executive Officer Cindy Smith said today, "I am pleased to see the commitment of \$1.6 billion over 11 years for paid work placements for students in social work. We welcome this and keenly await the detail on how these resources will be administered to students. The AASW is eager to ensure that the way the funding is distributed doesn't put pressure on placement providers." she said.

"Aligning these payments with AUSTUDY is a positive step towards recognising the valuable contributions of these students, ensuring they can focus on their education, and easing the financial burden. Jobs and Skills Australia projects the growth of social workers at over 23%. Investing in practical experience not only benefits students but also strengthens our workforce in critical areas," she said.

Cindy Smith views the funding for mental health through Medicare mental health centres as a positive and much-needed boost. "We welcome this injection of funding and look forward for social workers playing an active role in supporting the mental health of Australians. Mental

health care requires a special approach, and including social workers improves how the services are coordinated with the community," Cindy Smith said.

The AASW had been calling on the government to make this budget equitable. Still, the government has delivered a budget that takes small steps and shies away from systemic reform that will make a bigger impact.

"I appreciate the adjustments to the jobseeker program, such as lifting the earnings threshold and increasing rent assistance. Recognising these small changes are important; but we truly need systemic reform. We must address the root issues and ensure that all support aspects are adequately resourced. This is not occurring currently." CEO Cindy Smith said.

The AASW's call for equity in the budget reflects concerns that these changes may need to be revised to achieve real help for our community.

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