



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Budget a step in the right direction but too much residue from last year**

The Illawarra Forum still fear for many people on the lowest incomes following this year's Federal budget. While the budget takes a fairer approach to pension reform, it penalises one-income families and fails to stimulate real investment in job creation or growth.

"While we welcome some of the measures" said Acting CEO of the Illawarra Forum Simone Stuart, "we can't help but feel that last year's budget is casting a long shadow and spending is linked to the unfair measures proposed last year."

"We are still concerned about the 4 week wait for financial support young people will have to endure while they are forced to prove their efforts to find work", stated Ms. Stuart, "this pressure on people doesn't eventuate in job creation, especially in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven where youth unemployment is higher than the state average and transport options are limited"

While increased investment in childcare is welcomed, the Illawarra Forum does not support the push to make childcare a work-related service as opposed to a community service. The current data proves that socialisation and early education intervention of young children, is invaluable in terms of their positive progression through life.

"We are concerned that key features of the Families Package is unfair. It provides generous subsidies to families on high incomes while making cuts to family payments for low income families. Through this budget measure many children in low income families will lose 12 hours a week of early childhood education" said Ms. Stuart.

While the Illawarra Forum recognises some positive steps such as the reforms to the assets and income tests on the Aged Pension and the investment in school-to-work transition programs to assist unemployed young people, we are concerned that the tax cuts and measures for small businesses will not stimulate the economic activity that is needed to create jobs.

We are also positive about the person-centred approach in the home care packages under the Aged Care measure. However, it was unexpected at this time, so we will need more information on how it will be rolled out in order to ascertain any capacity implications it may have for our sector.

This budget does nothing to address the elephant in the room and that is the continuing lack of investment in affordable housing. While there is extension of funding to specialist homelessness services, there has been no action on negative gearing which the Illawarra Forum believes is continuing to push up the cost of real estate and is pricing low to middle income earners out of the housing market.



“While we at the Illawarra Forum try to remain positive” said Ms. Stuart, “we are disappointed with the lack of investment in real strategies to address domestic violence. Whilst an awareness raising campaign is welcome, a comprehensive funding package to assist women to flee family violence is required if we want to deliver change.”

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### **About the Illawarra Forum**

The Illawarra Forum is the peak body working for community services and organisations in the Illawarra and the Shoalhaven. It supports community organisations, promotes expertise and innovation in community development, fosters industry development and provides advocacy for social justice. The Illawarra Forum is an independent organisation governed by a committee of management elected annually by the membership.

The Forum represents the non-government community services industry in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven, which consists of approximately 300 organisations. The Illawarra Forum works closely with numerous organisations which provide support to vulnerable people across the region including:

- Social housing providers;
- Homelessness services;
- Home and community care services;
- People with disability;
- Individuals and families with multiple layers of social and financial disadvantage;
- Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault ;
- Youth work programs;
- Community health services, including mental health and drug/alcohol services;
- Community legal centre services; and
- Community development and community capacity building.