

MEDIA RELEASE

Federal Budget delivers no good news for ‘voiceless’ Australians *NDIS underspend to bolster projected budget surplus*

UnitingCare West has labelled the 2019 Federal Budget as a missed opportunity to rectify the inequality underpinning Australia’s welfare system and a cash grab on unspent National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funds to prop-up the budget bottom line.

CEO Amanda Hunt said that while Budget headlines focus on tax cuts and a projected return to surplus, very little had been done to support people in our community rendered unheard and invisible by their economic and social circumstances.

“This was an opportunity for the Federal Government to increase Newstart and Youth Allowance payments to support individuals and families living in poverty and to put in place a realistic long-term strategy to meet increasing demand for affordable housing,” Ms Hunt said.

“Instead of addressing issues of rising homelessness and disadvantage, we’re cutting tax for middle income earners and dipping into unspent NDIS dollars to bolster a large portion of the projected budget surplus in 2019-20.”

Ms Hunt said the slow pace of the NDIS roll-out also needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

“The way the NDIS is being implemented means it’s taking much longer than expected for people to enter the scheme and even longer again to receive the support they need,” Ms Hunt said.

“Despite our best efforts to support people to interpret and access services under their NDIS plan, the issues thwarting the roll-out mean that in many cases, people with disability remain in a state of limbo.

“We need a much faster, more effective NDIS roll-out, where unspent funds are directed back to the people who need help, not to underpin a future budget surplus.

“Given the economic buoyancy surrounding this Budget, I would like to think we have the means to give all Australians a voice, to be heard and be part of a compassionate, inclusive society,” Ms Hunt added.

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