2023-2024 Federal Budget - *At a Glance*

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| **Key area for CFECFW members** | **Budget allocation**  | **CFECFW response**  |
| JobSeeker and Working Age support payments | $4.9 billion over 5 years, with $1.3 billion per year ongoing | For the 1.1 million Australians receiving income support in the form of JobSeeker payments, an increase of $40 a fortnight is welcome. However, this is significantly less than the fortnightly $256 rise recommended by the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee. There will be a slightly smaller increase for those receiving AusStudy and Youth Allowance payments. While it is vitally important that families relying on these payment supports are able to meet basic costs of living, such as food, transport, and housing payments, the Centre will be hoping to see a more substantial amount offered to these families in the future.  |
| Community Services | $200 million over six years | The government is providing funding to address entrenched community disadvantage, recognising the unprecedented demand for community services supporting vulnerable families. Cost of living pressures have led to significantly increased demand for family services as many more Australians rely on their support to put food on the table, a roof over their heads, pay for rent and medications, flee from family violence, meet educational expenses, access specialist services, keep the family together, and reduce the long-term impacts of economic disadvantage and intergenerational trauma. |
| Cost of living relief  | $14.6 billion package | The $14.6 billion cost of living plan, supporting vulnerable children, young people and their families, will help with easing household budget pressures. An increase to the maximum amount of Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 15% for low-income earners will mean an $31 extra per fortnight. While this is the first increase to this subsidy for more than 30 years, it will not alleviate the anxiety many families face, with housing affordability proving an ongoing challenge in our economy. More than 5 million households will receive a significant cut to their energy bills over the next twelve months, in the form of $500 reduction for those receiving government concession discounts. There will also be investment in making energy costs more tenable in the long term, with low-cost loans to be offered to make homes more energy efficient. A very welcome investment by the government is a much-needed 15% wage increase for the aged care workforce. These essential workers, most of whom are women on low incomes, will receive their pay increase over the next 12 months, hopefully providing an incentive for them to stay in a caring profession that needs skilled workers.  |
| Parents and families | $1.9 billion over 5 years from 2022-23 (and $0.5 billion per year ongoing$326.7 million | *Expansion of Parenting Payment Single*This support will be increased, with eligible single parents currently on JobSeeker payments receiving an additional $176 per fortnight. Most significantly, this support will be in place until their youngest child turns 14, rather than 8. This policy amendment will allow single parent families to plan ahead. It means single parents, mostly single mothers, can provide care for their families, undertake part-time work or study, or meet other caring commitments.*More affordable Child Care*There are also benefits for children and families in the government’s commitment to providing additional parental leave payments and more accessible early childhood education with the Child Care Subsidy boosted up to 90% for lower income families from July. This will provide opportunities, particularly for women, to return to or participate more fully in the workforce.*Women’s Safety*It is pleasing to see the investment of $326.7 million over four years into family violence support initiatives under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children. Frontline service delivery organisations will receive $159 million in partnership with the states as part of this investment, to ensure they can continue to provide much needed support to women and children. |
| Health | $3.5bn over five years$732.9 million over 4 years | *Medicare*The $5.7 billion investment in Medicare, aimed at strengthening the bulk-billing scheme, will enable vulnerable children, young people and their families to get the healthcare they need, when they need it.An incentive for General Practitioners to provide Bulk Billing services to patients means more patients can be seen by a doctor when they need to be. The cost of accessing healthcare can be a significant barrier for young people and families, who may delay essential healthcare appointments or follow up treatments due to the expense. It is very welcome relief to many families who are struggling to access healthcare, and for those with chronic conditions. A change to the way some prescription medication can be purchased will also provide relief. *NDIS*The government’s commitment to the NDIS means that participants, carers, families and providers can have confidence in the sustainability of the Scheme. An additional $48.3 million in the 2023-24 Budget will be used to crack down on fraud, funding 200 National Disability Insurance Agency staff and the development of a business case for ICT systems to detect, prevent and reduce non-compliant payments. The Centre welcomes this commitment to ensure that the NDIS can function as intended, supporting people with disability to lead the best lives possible. |
| Emergency relief and disaster support | $169.3 million over 5 years | In the wake of recent natural disasters, direct support in the form of Disaster Relief Funding will enable local communities to improve their resilience to the effects of climate change. Increasing the capacity of the National Emergency Management Agency allows the government to better understand what supports are needed following an emergency, and where these are most needed. This is a welcome response that will see more resources going to families and communities that have been hardest hit by the impacts of climate change and natural disasters. |
| First Nations  | $492.7 million over five years$194 million over five years | Close the Gap – the Centre welcomes further investments in infrastructure, employment, justice, education and housing initiatives for First Nations peoples.*First Nation’s women’s safety*An additional $194 million will be spent over five years in programs focused on the care and protection of First Nations women and children – a vitally important measure to address the impacts of family violence on First Nations women and their children. |