

BUDGET 2020 - A LOST OPPORTUNITY

Comments on the Commonwealth Budget show the overall sentiment is one of opportunities lost, though there were some announcements that will support people working in and supported by the social service sector.

It does little however to support those whose lives have been shattered by the coronavirus and the related structures of exclusion. This is a budget that, without doubt, will increase inequality.

As stated in the Sisters of St Joseph's media release, it is those who are already disadvantaged who will miss out. The immediate economic victims will be people who already work in precarious employment, and those who even now are suffering from the deprivations of Covid-19.

- There is no funding to deal with the crises in **aged care facilities**
- The **JobMaker** hiring credit excludes anyone over 35 who lost their job throughout COVID-19
- **Older women** have been largely excluded from wage subsidies, which are instead focussed on under-35-year-olds and male-dominated industries
- The **tax package** created by the Coalition benefits the top 20% of income earners by 41% in 2020-21, and an extraordinary 88% in 2021-22 — after lower-income earners receive just one allocation of a \$1080 refund (the Australia Institute)
- There is no new funding for **public housing**, and this budget plans to cut more than \$41 million from **homelessness** services and social housing
- Financial support for **refugees and asylum seekers** has been progressively slashed over the past four budgets from \$139.8 million in 2017-18 to just \$19.6 million in 2020-21.
- The budget has again cut the ABC's general operational activities, from \$939 million in 2019-20 to \$898 million in 2020-21
- There is minimal funding for **Indigenous groups and services**
- There is no increase in the **foreign aid budget** (Australia is one of the lowest donors among OECD countries)
- **Renewable energy** is largely ignored with the irresponsible allocation of \$52 million for gas fields and infrastructure, and a \$1.9 billion technology package focussed on outdated technologies rather than solar and wind.

This moment in Australia's history, with all its injustice, fear and anxiety calls us to embrace new possibilities. As the next Federal election looms it is up to all of us, as Australians, to foster a conversation about what kind of a society we do want, and the economic system that will promote such a society.