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## **Federal Budget an opportunity to ensure that those on the margins of society are no longer overlooked: Jesuit Social Services**

The upcoming 2023-24 Federal Budget, to be handed down next month, represents a valuable opportunity for the Federal Government to make targeted and tailored investments to ensure that all Australians have the opportunity to reach their potential and that nobody is left behind, says Jesuit Social Services.

“Last year’s Federal Election result demonstrated that millions of Australians share our desire for our political leaders to commit to policies and investments that build a more compassionate Australia,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“We have already seen this in action though the Federal Government’s commitment to progress the Uluru Statement from the Heart, establishing more ambitious emissions reductions targets and an increase to the minimum wage. But as we know, COVID-19 exacerbated many pre-existing problems in our society, such as housing stress, poverty, family violence and insecure employment.

“Coupled with rising interest rates, cost of living pressures and the climate crisis, this has been a very challenging time in our history. This Federal Budget is a critical opportunity for our Government to ensure that those on the margins of society are no longer overlooked, and that every Australian is supported to flourish.”

Jesuit Social Services recently published its [2023-24 Federal pre-Budget submission](#), which draws on more than 45 years of advocacy and action to provide recommendations across a range of interconnected social policy areas spanning adult and youth justice, education, training and employment, gender justice, housing, locational disadvantage, disability and complex needs, immigration and settlement and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination.

Key recommendations include the resourcing of long-term, place-based approaches in locations experiencing complex disadvantage, increasing the base rate of Jobseeker and related payments to at least \$73 per day, the building of broader community resilience to climate change by resourcing the establishment and coordination of place-based, cross-sector resilience coalitions and replacing the compliance-focused Jobactive system with a new model that is flexible, person-centred, voluntary, and is delivered by community sector and not-for-profit organisations.

“We are also calling on the Federal Government to invest in a coordinated approach to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years across all states and territories alongside funding restorative justice, family-centred and therapeutic approaches to respond to children under 14 who come into contact with police. There has been some positive progress to raise the age in some jurisdictions, but we call for national leadership on this issue so that children as young as 10 years of age in every jurisdiction will no longer be locked up. This will lead to better outcomes for children, their families and the broader community.

“Our vision is for a more compassionate and just Australia, and we have seen steps towards this over the past year. We know that a commitment to and investments in more policies, practices and ideas that reduce inequality, prejudice and exclusion will give us the best chance of realising this vision. This Federal Budget arrives at a critical time when there is an opportunity to make a tangible difference to the lives of many Australians and give everyone the chance to thrive.”

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