

Media Release

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It's not a surplus unless you've covered the essentials

UnitingCare Australia believes that a real surplus is what's left after budgeting for the essentials.

A 'surplus' gained at the cost of allowing children to live in poverty, people with disabilities to go without the basic support they need, older Australians to die waiting for home care packages, and homelessness to reach record levels, does not measure up.

All around the world we can see that social cohesion and trust in democratic processes depend on sharing the benefits of growth and promoting a culture of respect.

Inequality in Australia is now at a level that threatens our future health and prosperity.

UnitingCare Australia National Director, Claerwen Little said: 'A strong economy is one that enables a just and cohesive society. Eliminating poverty and homelessness, meeting the needs of people with disabilities and those who need care and support as they age – these are among the essentials that the Budget must cover, and it doesn't.'

We welcome the funding announced for the *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability*, and also the youth mental health and suicide prevention strategy.

However, what we were hoping is that tonight's Budget would include initiatives to ensure a living income for all Australians through: a job guarantee and welfare payments that cannot fall below the poverty line, a national plan to eliminate homelessness, and a guarantee that the NDIS and Aged Care are funded at the level necessary to ensure that everyone benefits from access to safe and high-quality support.

ENDS

UnitingCare Australia is the national body for the network of Uniting Church community service organisations, one of the largest networks of providers of community services in Australia.

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