

## Welfare must invest properly in those with greatest need

“UnitingCare Australia shares the Government’s desire to see more people assisted into the workforce, but we also caution that a realistic understanding of the challenges facing the most vulnerable Australians is required,” said Lin Hatfield Dodds, National Director of UnitingCare Australia, in response to Minister Morrison’s speech at the National Press Club today.

“For many people welfare can and should function as a short term safety net, helping them through a difficult period of life before they move back into engagement with the workforce,” said Lin Hatfield Dodds, National Director of UnitingCare Australia.

“But we need to pay serious attention to how we support and enable change for those who are the most vulnerable. There are many people who are dependent on welfare for longer periods of time who cannot move to independence without significant supports.”

“Addressing the deepest challenges in our welfare system requires a long term view. This is why the New Zealand investment approach is to be applauded. In order to make long-term savings—and to improve people’s life chances—investment and early intervention are required,” said Lin Hatfield Dodds.

“We need to understand what life is like for the most disadvantaged Australians and we need to give them more support, not less. One key aspect of that support is ensuring that people’s payments are adequate to provide their basic needs and allow them to participate in the community. “

“The McClure report outlined the importance of ensuring payments are adequate now and in the future. It recommended changes that would lead to no one being worse off than they currently are. It is crucial that the Government pay particular attention to these recommendations.”

UnitingCare Australia believes the welfare budget should focus on people with the greatest need. “It is good that the Government has signalled its interest in some measures that would improve the targeting of spending, such as means-testing childcare payments. We encourage the Government to take a similar approach to all areas of welfare spend, including the aged pension.”

“UnitingCare Australia supports older Australians having a better quality of life in retirement through more effective use of their capital and superannuation. We were pleased to see Minister Morrison placing this issue on the agenda in his speech.”

“Welfare reform offers a valuable opportunity to improve the provision we make for people who rely on benefits. We must focus on making sure we improve the quality of supports we give to the most disadvantaged people.”

**END**

*UnitingCare Australia, an agency of the Uniting Church, represents one of the largest networks of social service providers in Australia, with a network that employs 39,000 staff, supported by 28,000 volunteers, operating nationally across 1,600 sites in remote, regional, rural and urban Australia.*

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