



Media Release

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Federal Budget 2015-16: Australia's most vulnerable remain vulnerable

Whilst cautiously welcoming the major initiatives in the 2015-16 Federal Budget, The Salvation Army says that Australia's most vulnerable are still being overlooked.

National Secretary of The Salvation Army, Lieutenant Colonel Kelvin Alley, says the initiatives in the Budget to simplify and strengthen the early childhood and education system, to restore the fair and reasonable indexation for pensioners, and to make realistic adjustments for age pension eligibility are commendable.

The Salvation Army particularly welcomes the injection of new funds for supporting young people and older Australians into the work force.

"We of course acknowledge the budgetary challenges faced by the Government," Lieut-Colonel Alley said.

"Notwithstanding these challenges, The Salvation Army remains concerned that this year's budget, as in previous years, does not adequately address the real needs of those who continue to live on the margins. It is the unemployed, the homeless, single parents and generally those battling to survive on income support payments, who will continue to struggle despite tonight's budget."

While The Salvation Army agrees with the government that there are immense benefits – both social and economic – in people gaining meaningful employment, it is incredibly difficult for people to find work when they are faced with the burden of having to live day in and day out below the poverty line.

"Gaining employment and finding affordable housing are the two significant issues facing vulnerable Australians today," Lieut-Colonel Alley said.

"Those who are forced to live on income support payments almost entirely live under the poverty line, with very little if anything left over once the rent and utility bills have been paid."

The Salvation Army welcomes the Child Care package announced in this year's budget, but is concerned that it is heavily weighted toward workforce participation, with those families unable to get into the workforce the least likely to benefit.

"There needs to be further discussion to ensure that the balance is right between workforce participation and childhood development," Lieut-Colonel Alley said.

"It is the children of Australia's most vulnerable families who are most in need of the educational development that early childhood education can offer."

The Salvation Army will continue to encourage the Government to invest in services which lift vulnerable Australians out of poverty, because it is only by doing so that we will see more positive outcomes for society in general and greater savings for the budget bottom line over the long-term.

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