

MEDIA RELEASE

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Federal budget one-off payments

A one-off \$250 payment is the only help that people on social security payments will receive from last night's Budget. For a so-called "cost of living budget", this one-off payment will do little to help the people who most need support to cover the basics of a home, food and medicine.

Leanne Ho, Chief Executive Officer of Economic Justice Australia, said:

"There is more in this budget for people earning a decent income than there is for people who are most vulnerable and in severe financial distress. Our legal centres assist people who live day to day not knowing how they will pay their rent or feed their family. People in this position need a permanent increase to their income support. When you're living on \$46 a day, a one-off \$250 payment may help with one or two bills, but after that, you'll be back in the same position. EJA calls on the Government to raise the rate of JobSeeker (and other allowances) to at least \$70 per day, the same level as pensions to cover the basics."

EJA has been calling for a raft of measures to remove barriers to accessing support for vulnerable cohorts - including people with disability, migrants, New Zealanders, and people on temporary visas living in Australia. We've also called for removal of harmful and punitive mutual obligation regimes and for an end to compulsory income management, which disproportionately impacts First Nations communities. There was nothing in the Budget to address these core systemic barriers.

Economic Justice Australia's member community legal centres provide free legal help to people having difficulty accessing Centrelink payments or have other problems with their income support, like unfair social security or family assistance debts.

Community legal centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services did not receive the funding boost they were calling for in this budget.

"Our members and other legal assistance providers which assist people having issues with Centrelink have experienced what is essentially a cut to funding, as there is no provision for increase in line with the CPI. These services are already stretched to the point where the demand for help cannot be met, particularly in regional and remote Aboriginal communities where some of the greatest need is", said Ho.

While the continuing investment in women's safety is a positive, with extension of the trial financial support packages of up to \$5000 for people escaping family and domestic violence, EJA was

disappointed that there are no social security system support measures to provide the ongoing economic security that is vital to rebuilding lives in safety.

MEDIA CONTACT: Leanne Ho (Chief Executive Officer) M: 0448 007 201 E: ceo@ejaustralia.org.au