

Barnardos Response to the 2025 Federal Budget

Overview

The 2025 Federal budget delivered by Jim Chalmers last night claims to be “building Australia’s future”. But a budget that doesn’t prioritise the long-term impacts on children, who are indeed the future of Australia, is a budget that won’t be building futures made in Australia.

While there are some short-term measures which will help some families, particularly to pay for medicine and see a doctor, and access early childhood education, Barnardos Australia (Barnardos) is disappointed in the Government’s lack of investment in the future of Australia, our children and young people.

As we face a forthcoming Federal Election, how does the Albanese Government’s commitments stack up if we were really designing a budget for children?

Welcome Initiatives

Child poverty is an expensive problem for a country to have. Despite Australia’s wealth, 1 in 6 children experience poverty, however, we know that this number is growing.

As the cost of living rises, more families are seeking social supports so that they can pay the rent and put food on the table. In times like these and in line with Malsow’s hierarchy of needs, children’s health and education falls to the wayside. Children experience the long-term effects of this throughout their lives as unaddressed health issues worsen and interrupted education compounds their lack of opportunity to build a safe and stable future. This also costs the economy greatly over a lifetime.

One of the most significant positive steps in the 2025 budget is the increase in the Medicare rebate for GP appointments. If these measures can expand access to bulk billing doctors, as they are designed to do, we will reduce the mounting economic and social costs of neglected health in Australian children.

A quality education has an enormous positive effect on a child’s life outcomes. Barnardos welcome’s the Albanese Government’s commitment to guaranteeing 3 days of subsidised Early Childhood Education without requiring an activity test from parents. Removing this barrier will be beneficial to thousands of families who were previously unable to access this service. There is strong evidence that this will support a child’s intellectual and social development as well as ensuring that they are better prepared for school.

We welcome the commitment to fully fund public schools by 2035. As a signatory to the ‘For Every Child’ Campaign, Barnardos has joined coalition of organisations that are calling on the Leader of the Opposition to match the Prime Minister’s commitment. Strong public schools are critical to ensure that every child reaches their full potential. Barnardos believes the best type of intervention is prevention and we are proud to be a partner in the forthcoming, federally funded Child and Family Hub to be established in Shellharbour NSW with lead partner Karitane ([more info](#)). This model of service delivery ensures that children and families get the best support from the earliest opportunity. There are currently only a handful of these facilities in Australia. The Federal Government has an opportunity to scale these facilities across Australia so that every family has access to best practice support services that set children up for the best possible future. This type of long-term support for children will provide significant social and economic benefits to Australia over the next 20 years and beyond.

Missed Opportunities

While Barnardos welcomes these measures to ensure children receive education and health services sooner and more often, we would like to see more done to address the root causes of child poverty. Without adequate income to pay for housing, utilities and food, families can remain in a perpetual cycle of crisis. This insecurity is felt sharply by children. The longer children experience poverty, the greater the impact on the child and the economy.

Everyday we support families to overcome challenges like family violence and homelessness. Government income support is vital so that families can leave unsafe situations and rebuild, but the current rate of Jobseeker is not enough. On these payments, families can barely afford to pay for housing and food.

During the 2020-21 pandemic, when the Federal Government significantly increased income support payments, Barnardos observed a significant change in the health and wellbeing of the families coming to our Centres. Providing payments at a rate that would allow families to meet their basic needs is an investment in Australia's future. Ensuring this generation of children has access to a stable home, food, health and education will have enormous long term social and economic benefits. The growing number of children facing poverty in Australia will end up costing the government and taxpayers more in the long run if this is not addressed.

We would like to see children and young people positioned at the heart of future budgets and front and centre in people's mind when voting in the upcoming election. The next government must go beyond one-off payments and other band-aid solutions to address the bigger issues that prevent children and families from reaching their full potential.