

Cystic Fibrosis Queensland and Trusted Care Response to the 2023 Federal Budget

Last night's budget was delivered in a climate of cost-of-living pressures, putting the spotlight on easing the impacts of rising inflation. A range of measures were announced to provide timely benefits for individuals. From financial relief to cope with the cost of electricity, to higher welfare payments for parents, jobseekers, students, and those seeking rental assistance, increases in wages for aged care workers and a record tripling of the Medicare bulk-billing system. Let's look at how this will translate for our charity, our members, and our NDIS clients:

Cystic Fibrosis Queensland

The impact of inflation on our fundraising, especially in the first quarter of this year, has been greater than that of the height of the pandemic which saw us all in lockdown. This impact has been two-fold as unlike the pandemic, there has been no State or Federal funding to support peak charities, delivering essential programs which provide relief and alleviate the burden of disease to the Department of Health (both nationally and at the State level). This remains a challenge for our charity and we remain incredibly grateful to our supporters at this time.

The cost-of-living relief provided by this budget are simply that and it is not expected that this policy will provide real savings in wages, which is what is required for people to have discretionary spending and the ability to donate to a charity. Cystic Fibrosis Queensland does have DGR1 status which means that all donations over \$2 are tax deductible, and this most definitely appeals to people who are considering charitable giving as we head towards the end of the financial year.

Our members and our NDIS clients

Medicare:

The Treasurer announced an increase in the Medicare levy low-income threshold from 1 July 2022. This increase will apply to singles, families, seniors, and pensioners. The thresholds where taxpayers do not pay Medicare levy will increase as follows: Singles – from \$23,365 to \$24,276, Families – from \$39,402 to \$40,939. For each dependent child or student, the family income threshold will increase by a further \$3,760, an increase from the previous amount of \$3,619. Single seniors and pensioners – from \$36,925 to \$38,365. Family seniors and pensioners – from \$51,401 to \$53,406. This is welcomed support. The \$3.5 billion bulk billing incentive to help GPs provide free consultations is also welcomed. The goal is to lessen the cost and broaden ease of access for those struggling to afford quality care and assistance.

Medication:

Australians will be able to buy two months' worth of medicine for the price of a single (one month) prescription for more than 300 common PBS medicines. This aim is to halve patients' visits to the GP and pharmacist - saving patients an estimated \$1.6 billion and freeing up millions of GP appointments.

Welfare:

Several substantial welfare incentives and relief measures aimed at low-income and disadvantaged individual were announced and while most do not go far enough, they are step in the right direction. Sadly, there is no relief for middle income earners who remain doing most of the heavy lifting.

The Government will increase the base rate of working age and student payments by \$40 per fortnight to JobSeeker and other allowance payments commencing on 20 September 2023. It will also extend eligibility for the existing higher single JobSeeker payment rate for recipients aged 60 years and older to recipients aged 55 years and older.

Childcare:

The Budget includes an additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) that will provide \$2.8 million in the next four years starting from 2023-24 to streamline delivery of the ACCS and expand the exceptional circumstances criteria. The Budget also provides \$72.4 million over five years from 2022-23 to support the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector to build and retain the ECEC workforce. Trusted Care, our NDIS provider, is already exploring the possibility of an ECEC contract as we can see the benefits for our rural, regional, and remote families with children living with cystic fibrosis.

Energy:

The Government is addressing rising energy prices by providing targeted energy bill relief and progressing gas market reforms. Funding includes: \$1.5 billion over two years from 2023-24 to establish the Energy Bill Relief Fund to support targeted energy bill relief to eligible households (means tested and priority given those already in receipt of Government benefits).

Housing:

The Government is introducing multiple measures to stimulate an increase in Australia's housing supply by targeting new build-to-rent (BTR) projects and increasing access to affordable housing schemes.

Health campaigns:

The 2023-24 Budget funds strong actions to reduce smoking and vaping rates, particularly among young Australians. \$247.4 million to tackle smoking and vaping. A new anti-smoking and anti-vaping campaign will be rolled out, along with more information and support to help people quit.

Trusted Care

NDIS:

The Government, like Cystic Fibrosis Queensland, remains committed to the NDIS. Our national provider, Trusted Care, continues to grow from strength to strength providing quality supports and plan management. The budget commits \$733m over four years for a range of measures to improve the scheme's effectiveness and help its almost 600,000 participants manage their plans. More than half of the new funding (\$430m) was committed to building capability within the NDIA.



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