

Needlessly harsh state budget

Ross Womersley Executive Director of the SA Council of Social Service, responding to the state budget, said, “All the figures point to the fact that the SA economy is ticking along nicely. Employment is growing, GST inflows are ahead of even the most ambitious projections. The government has honoured its election commitments, but when you look more closely, it is imposing real costs on some of the most disadvantaged people in our community.

“SACOSS is deeply concerned about the flow-on impact to the state’s most disadvantaged that will emerge from a public sector drained of its capacity with ongoing cuts. The recently leaked sustainable budget commission cabinet papers gave the impression that non-government health and community services would simply be expected to pick this up at no cost. This is simply unrealistic, when the sector is already stretched beyond capacity in so many areas. These are crucial services that government should provide to ensure a stable social fabric for the state, and if they will not, then funding needs to flow to ensure they are delivered.”

“SACOSS welcomes the government’s commitment to follow-through on its pre-election promise to increase concessions, and we also welcome the increase in funds for people who live with a disability, noting however that this comes off a very low base. SACOSS also welcomes the decision to extend mining royalties; the mining industry is doing very well and it’s only fair that they should make a real contribution to our community.”

“SACOSS notes with dismay, though, that other revenue measures like increasing public transport costs and licence fees will impact most on the very people who can least afford it.”

“It is counterproductive that at a time when as many young people as possible need employment skills, the Treasurer has decided to increase TAFE fees by 20% an hour.”

“While capping the first homeowner’s grant is a no-brainer, and targeting the first homeowners’ bonus grant at new homes will boost housing supply, SACOSS is deeply concerned that this will encourage even more new, fringe developments with a dearth of early infrastructure planning.”

“We’re also extremely disappointed with the decision to add up to \$10 per week to the rents of pensioners in Housing SA accommodation. This is a major hike and takes up nearly a quarter of the long-overdue pension rise pensioners got just last year.”

“There is also no doubt that we must invest renewed effort in building good quality, affordable and sustainable social housing. However \$419m of the \$420m announced in today’s budget for social housing is federal money.”

“The \$30 increase in the victims of crime levy would be welcome if only the government were investing in restorative justice and/or preventative programmes for young people at risk of entering the criminal justice system.”