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WELFARE SECTOR DEMANDS URGENT COST OF LIVING RELIEF FOR MOST VULNERABLE

A group of South Australia’s major charitable organisations will unite today to call for a commitment from all political parties in the state election to provide a relief package for the lowest income households facing cost of living pressures.

The South Australian Council of Social Services with support from some of its major charitable organisation members will unite today to call for a commitment from all political parties in the state election to provide a relief package for the lowest income households across South Australia – those for whom increased cost of living pressures are the most severe.

SACOSS and its members have proposed a package of 12 measures dealing with housing, utilities, transport and debt relief.

Over the last 5 years in Adelaide, electricity prices have risen by 66%, water by 60%, rent by 20% and health costs by 30%. By comparison, CPI – and many low incomes that are pegged to it – has only risen by 12%.

Ross Womersley, Executive Director of the South Australian Council of Social Service said, “There is no doubt that households on low incomes are having a very hard time with rising prices for basic necessities”

“The measures we are proposing are based on our policy research in this area over a number of years and on the experience of our member organisations who provide front-line services to people in need”.

It’s crucial that no matter which party might seek to govern after the March election, they must put measures in place to address these critical concerns.

CEO of Lutheran Community Care Helen Lockwood said, “This package contains measures to provide emergency payments to people to avert homelessness and to relieve housing stress on public tenants for whom the safety net is not working”

“Given recent increases in rent prices in Adelaide well above the CPI, these sorts of measures are really necessary to ensure people are not plunged into poverty and homelessness”

Uniting Communities CEO Simon Schrapel said,

“Everyone knows that electricity, gas and water prices have sky-rocketed in recent years, but these increases hit low income households particularly hard because these utilities make up a greater proportion of their household budget, leaving limited money to spare”

Paul Scully, CEO of Baptist Care SA continued,

“Getting a properly indexed concession scheme and ensuring a fair process with an independent umpire before people have their electricity cut off are very basic ways to provide help for people struggling with huge bills.”

The Rev'd Peter Sandeman from AnglicareSA said,

“We know that financial stress can lead to mental and physical health issues, relationship breakdown and a host of other problems, so support for people when they get into debt trouble is vital to stop debts becoming to financial and personal crises.

“The debt measures proposed, establishing new no-or-low cost support services, are vital early interventions which can help people get back on their feet.”

The Cost of Living Relief package can be downloaded from the SACOSS website

<http://www.sacoss.org.au/cost-living-relief>

Note for Media organisations:

SACOSS Executive Director Ross Womersley will be joined by several Directors from major charities at the steps of Parliament House at **12:15pm Wednesday 11 December**

Some people supported by these organisations who are directly feeling the impact of the rising cost of living will also be available for comment

