

MEDIA RELEASE

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BUDGET RECOGNISES ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF FAMILY SUPPORT

Family Relationship Services Australia (FRSA), the peak national body for family and relationship services welcomes the inclusion of family support measures in a Federal Budget that is focused on workforce participation and economic outcomes.

"Family services provide a range of practical and emotional supports that can ultimately help to address barriers to social and economic participation – barriers such as lack of confidence, difficulties establishing routines, transport issues, communication skills and emotional stability. When integrated with other supports that assist with vocational skills development and employer engagement these services can make a significant difference and it is encouraging to see this recognised in the Budget" said Samantha Page, Executive Director.

The Family Support Program contains new investment of an additional \$23.4M for new and existing Communities for Children programs and \$61M for Mental Health Family Support. The Budget also includes funding for service coordination and other measures that will increase the supports available to families at risk of long term exclusion from the labor market, particularly in areas of known disadvantage.

While the additional investment in support services is welcome, FRSA is concerned about the potential for increased requirements on sole parents that may result in harsh penalties such as the suspension of income support payments. This can create significant hardship and have negative impacts on children in vulnerable circumstances. It can also put pressure on already stretched welfare services.

FRSA Executive Director, Samantha Page indicated that, "we acknowledge the Government's commitment to addressing long term unemployment and increasing workforce participation amongst disadvantaged groups. At the same time we understand the complexities facing families struggling to survive on income support payments while looking for work that is compatible with their parenting responsibilities. We believe that family and relationship services have an important role in this area and look forward to participating in the development of effective responses."

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