



## Budget 2019: What it means for carers

Set out below is an overview of the key 2019-20 federal Budget measures that may affect carers.

There may be other relevant measures that are not included in this overview and more detailed information can be found at [www.budget.gov.au](http://www.budget.gov.au)

Call the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) for information about income support payments:

- **carers** (Carer Payment and Carer Allowance) Mon to Fri 8 am to 5 pm on **132 717**
- **families** (Family Tax Benefit, Child Care Benefit, Parenting Payment, Double Orphan Pension, Baby Bonus) Mon to Fri 8 am to 8 pm on **136 150**
- **people with disability** (Disability Support Pension, Mobility Allowance, Sickness Allowance) Mon to Fri 8 am to 5 pm on **132 717**
- **students and trainees** (Austudy, Low Income Health Care Card, Pensioner Education Supplement, Youth Allowance) Mon to Fri 8 am to 5 pm on **132 490**, or for ABSTUDY Mon to Fri 8 am to 5 pm on **1800 132 317**

## Please note that Budget measures must be passed by Parliament before they can come into effect

### Summary

The 2019-20 Federal Budget, delivered on 2 April, contains measures across carer services, aged care, health and – to a much lesser extent – income support, which will assist some carers and people with care needs.

From Carers Australia's perspective, a top up of \$84.3 million over four years to fund the new Integrated Carer Support Services scheme to be introduced in November is welcome. While we generally support the design of the new scheme, we have had concerns about the adequacy of its funding.

In other important areas the Budget has fallen short of our hopes.

Despite the Treasurer identifying investment in 10,000 new aged care Home Care Packages, this is old news and does not represent a commitment of new funding in the 2019-20 Budget. The Department of Health has given evidence before the Aged Care Royal Commission that \$2.5 billion is needed to address the waiting times of more than 18 months for older Australians to access the support they have been assessed as needing.

We are also concerned that an estimated \$2.5 billion National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) underspend against projected spending for 2017-18, not including commitments by the states and territories, is being transferred back into general revenue, rather than being used to address some of the problems which have emerged as the Scheme is being rolled out.

Another disappointment is that no increase in Newstart payments were announced. The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) has been calling for an immediate increase of \$75 a week to the Newstart Allowance and the introduction of a better system of indexation which more accurately reflects increases in the cost of living. This position is widely supported across the community sector and beyond. Many unemployed carers who provide a substantial amount of care, but not enough to qualify them for the Carer Payment, receive Newstart Allowance. The amount of care they do provide can be a barrier to them finding suitable employment. In this context, it is worth noting that the average age of a primary carer is 55 years and that there are more unemployed workers between the ages of 55 years and 64 years than any other age cohort. They depend on Newstart Allowance for longer than any other group.

## Budget Announcements

### Carer services

#### Integrated Carer Support Services

##### What has changed?

The new Integrated Carer Support Service program, announced in last year's Budget, will provide new online counselling, coaching and peer support services as well as educational material and direct services across 16 regions. Regional services will include emergency respite, counselling, coaching, peer support, and access to a capped number of financial packages for up to \$3000 per annum which can be used at the recipient's discretion to cover costs associated with education, employment, travel and opportunities to take a break from the provision of daily care.

In this Budget, additional funding of \$84.3 million will be provided over four years. The additional funding will mostly be directed to increasing the number of financial packages available to 5,000 per year, with 25 per cent of the packages reserved for young carers under 25 years old. It will also be used to fund young carer workers in each regional area.

##### Who does this affect?

Mostly young carers, under 25 years old, seeking support services especially to assist them to remain in education and engage in employment.

### Aged care and services

##### What has changed?

The Government will increase spending on aged care quality. New and previously announced measures funded through this Budget include:

- \$38.4 million over five years from 2018-19 to strengthen aged care regulation through the establishment of a risk-based compliance and information sharing system in the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
- \$8.4 million over five years from 2018-19 to introduce mandatory reporting against national residential care quality indicators for pressure sores, use of physical restraint, weight loss, falls and fractures, and medication management
- \$7.7 million over two years from 2018-19 to develop an end-to-end compliance framework for the Home Care program, including the increased auditing and monitoring of home care providers
- \$5.6 million in 2019-20 to commence the implementation of an enhanced home care compliance framework to improve the quality and safety of home care services and enhance the integrity of the home care system
- \$3.4 million over two years from 2019-20 for the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to address the use of chemical restraints and the inappropriate use of antibiotics in residential aged care facilities
- \$2.6 million in 2019-20 to provide additional support for the implementation of the Aged Care Workforce Strategy
- \$1.5 million in 2019-20 to undertake preparatory work for the introduction of a new Serious Incident Response Scheme from July 2022, which will require residential care providers to report a broader range of incidents occurring in their facilities.

- \$1.1 billion investment into Primary Health Care including maintaining the current incentive for GPs to treat older people in residential aged care.
- A comprehensive dental and oral health care scheme for pensioners and people living in residential aged care.

### Who does this affect?

These measures are designed to give older people and their carers and families greater confidence in residential aged care and the quality of care that will be provided.

## Health

### Mental Health

#### What has changed?

Additional mental health services will be funded with a total of \$229.9 million over seven years from 2018-19. Funding will be to a range of programs and services, with some services given certainty of funding over the entire seven years.

An additional \$105.7 million will be used to extend the Early Psychosis Youth Service program for two years and a further \$109.9 million will be provided to Headspace to improve services over seven years.

#### Who does this affect?

Users of specifically funded services will benefit, particularly young people with mental health conditions.

### Additional funding for health conditions and pharmaceuticals

#### What has changed?

A number of programs have been introduced or have changed, including:

- expansion of the *Continuous Glucose Monitoring Program* to include people aged under 21 years with certain conditions
- additional diagnostic imaging services to be available through Medicare
- extension of the Epilepsy Smart Australia Program Pilot for a further two years.

New listings under the *Life Saving Drugs Program* will be:

- new and amended listings of nitisinone (Orfadin® and Nityr®) from 1 May 2019, for the treatment of Hereditary Tyrosinaemia Type-1
- new listing of cerliponase alfa (Brineura®) from 1 May 2019, for the treatment of Neuronal Ceroid Lipofuscinosis Type-2 (CLN 2), also known as Batten Disease.

Additional Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listings included in the Budget, at a cost of \$331 million over five years, are:

- Osimertinib (Tagrisso®) from 1 February 2019, for the treatment of locally advanced or metastatic non-small cell lung cancer
- Venetoclax (Venclexta®) from 1 March 2019, for the treatment of chronic lymphocytic leukaemia

- Brentuximab vedotin (Adectris®) from 1 April 2019, for the treatment of CD30 positive cutaneous T-cell lymphoma
- Inotuzumab ozogamicin (Besponsa®) from 1 May 2019, for the treatment of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia.

### **Who does this affect?**

This will support people with specific conditions and medical needs identified above...

## **Community health**

### **What has changed?**

The Budget provides for funding of \$1.3 billion over seven years to the Community Health and Hospitals Program.

### **Who does this affect?**

Specific infrastructure and equipment funding is to be provided to specified hospitals in each state and territory.

## **Social services and Centrelink payments**

### **Energy Assistance Payment**

#### **What has changed?**

A one-off Energy Assistance Payment of \$75 for singles and \$125 for couples receiving some income support payments will be made to help cover their next electricity bill.

#### **Who does this affect?**

The one-off Energy Assistance Payment will be paid into the bank accounts of people who receive Government pensions, payments and allowances..

### **Cashless Debit Card**

#### **What has changed?**

The trials of the Cashless Debit Card will be extended, so that they will end on 30 June 2021. Income Management participants will transition to the Cashless Debit Card from 1 January 2020. The Budget measure will not expand the trial to new locations.

#### **Who does this affect?**

People currently holding, or living in locations, subject to the Cashless Debit Card or Income Management. The Cashless Debit Card Trials are currently operating in:

- Ceduna region, South Australia
- East Kimberley region, Western Australia
- Goldfields region, Western Australia
- Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region, Queensland.

The Carer Payment is subject to the Cashless Debit Card in all sites, except the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay Region. Age Pension and Veterans' Pension are exempt in all locations.

Income Management operates in communities across Australia, and is generally applied on a case management basis, except in the Northern Territory where all people who are long term unemployed are included.

## **Tax and Medicare**

### **Medicare threshold**

#### **What has changed?**

The low income threshold for paying the Medicare Levy has increased in line with inflation. That means lower income earners, including pensioners and people receiving Carer Payment can earn more before they start paying the Medicare Levy – that is, they will pay less.

#### **Who does this affect?**

All low income earners and people receiving income support payments, including Carer Payment, Disability Support Payment, Age Pension and family assistance payments will have a higher income threshold before they pay the Medicare Levy.