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Budget fails to deliver real investment in nursing, midwifery and aged care

While the Treasurer may have acknowledged healthcare workers for their courage, commitment, and compassion during the COVID-19 pandemic, last night's Federal Budget announcement sadly shows a failure to deliver.

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) Secretary Emily Shepherd says, "despite the Government's promises of meaningful support and reward for healthcare workers, the Budget fails to deliver on this - instead offering words over real action."

"We have seen very little investment in nursing and midwifery, and even less in aged care. While we appreciate the gesture of the Treasurer in thanking Australia's healthcare workers for the incredible role, they have played in protecting and supporting the community throughout the pandemic, the Budget offers them very little support for this," said Ms Shepherd.

"The Government's claims of 'record funding for aged care' are woefully lacking particularly with the deferral of urgently needed action in chronically understaffed nursing homes until the completion of the 2021 Royal Commission into Aged Care in February 2021."

Overall, the ANMF and our members are disappointed with the announcement. There has been no action on job security and improving wages and conditions, particularly for those employed in aged care.

Women have once again been left out of the Budget too. "Women make up the majority of nurses, midwives, and care workers employed in the healthcare industry and they have once again been overlooked by the Government," said Ms Shepherd.

"It is also disappointing that we have seen little action on job security and improving wages and conditions for aged care workers. Even with an additional 23,000 extra home care places, this will do little to reduce the long waiting list of over 100,000 elderly Australians who are already waiting up to 12-months or more for an appropriate home care package."

"If jobs are the cornerstone of the national economic recovery-plan, the Government needs to act now, not in another 3-6 months' time, to address the dangerously inadequate levels of qualified nurses and care workers employed in aged care."

The ANMF acknowledge some areas of real improvement from the Budget.

“We welcome the announcement of more funding for mental health services, and the NDIS and PBS listings for drugs to treat a range of diseases, including ovarian cancer, leukaemia, melanoma and Parkinson’s disease. These are areas of real need for Tasmanians.”

We are also pleased to see a number of commitments to a COVID-19 response with \$133.6 billion for hospital capacity, \$750 million to support the continuation of COVID-19 testing, including for essential workers in industries like aged care, and \$170.8 million for the continued operation of up to 150 dedicated respiratory clinics to manage and diagnose COVID-19 cases.

“The ANMF and our members had hoped for a proactive Budget that prioritised health workers and the community’s healthcare needs during these unprecedented times. While some positive steps have been taken, particularly in the area of COVID-19 recovery, other areas remain in desperate need of reform. Frontline workers, particularly those in aged care, wanted and needed real action and recognition of the conditions they have been working under, sadly this has not been fully addressed,” said Ms Shepherd.

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