

Media Release
13 May 2014

The Budget to Blow Your House Down

“Budget 2014 represents another missed opportunity to address Australia’s chronic housing affordability problem. Older, single women face the biggest housing challenges in our community. Now is not the time to drop the ball on housing. We desperately need leadership and intervention from the federal government,” Helen Dalley-Fisher, Equality Rights Alliance Program Manager, said.

“We are deeply concerned that the National Rental Affordability Scheme has been cut with no proposed replacement to stimulate affordable rental investment. There is a broad consensus across the community and development sectors that the government has a role to play in leveraging investment into the lower end of the housing market. Affordable rental has the capacity to catch the growing number of people, many of whom are older, single women and single parents, falling in the gap between affordable rental housing and public housing.

We do welcome another year of funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Homeless which puts a short-term roof over the head of women leaving violent relationships. The challenge for the government beyond this budget is to ensure that this funding continues and to address the chronic undersupply of affordable housing which keeps women in violent relationships.

We are disappointed that the COAG reform council has been scrapped. The COAG Reform Council has been an important accountability mechanism for the National Affordable Housing Agreement. This coupled with the abolition of the National Housing Supply Council will make it harder to monitor Australia’s housing landscape.

The Equality Rights Alliance is concerned that there has been no attempt to reform negative gearing and the capital gains tax exemption, two significant tax levers which have the potential to improve affordable housing supply and boost revenue.

There is broad based support amongst the housing sector for innovation to address the chronic undersupply of affordable housing, and we look forward to the Abbott Government taking strong steps in the next budget.

In addition to housing stress, the introduction of \$5 and 80c co-payments for the PBS and \$7 GP co-payments constitute another challenge to women. Many of our members in the women’s sector have expressed particular concern about patients who already can’t afford

Equality Rights Alliance

Women’s Voices for Gender Equality

Level 5, 161 London Circuit, Canberra ACT 2602 | PO Box 1022 Dickson ACT 2602

T: 02 6175 9926 | F: 02 6175 9993 | E: era.admin@ywca.org.au

www.equalityrightsalliance.org.au

public transport or phone credit to make appointments. Co-payments for health services will disproportionately penalise women, who are disproportionately at risk of poverty.

Women who do not control their own finances, such as women under financial guardianship or experiencing domestic violence and financial abuse. We are also concerned about the introduction of co-payments for PBS and GPs having the potential to also disproportionately impact women with large families in their access to pre-natal care etc, which in turn may disproportionately impact CALD communities," Ms Dalley-Fisher said.

Media Contact:

Helen Dalley-Fisher

Program Manager

(02) 6230 5152

0413 065 822

Hannah Gissane

Project Co-ordinator

(02) 6230 5152

0435 919 077

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