

High Expectations - Low Outcomes

Financial fairness and financial safety were missing before the women's budget and it is missing now.

The National Council of Single Mothers & their Children Inc (NCSMC) went to Canberra having just heard about the Family Home Guarantee. We were delighted and prepared to feel 'Wow!'. This was the first announcement in many years that was shaped to support single mothers. A small number, it was nevertheless positive in its action, focus and language. We hoped for more.

Prior to the budget NCSMC lobbied and lodged our Pre-Budget Submission. We engaged in every political process, every inquiry and put a Petition to the House of Representatives. We gathered evidence of the transformative and life changing effects of the full coronavirus supplement for those who received it. And we kept advocating for it to be extended to the single mother families who missed out.

An injection of resources when your constant companion is hardship was and can be profound. We know it, we saw it, and were privileged to have a front row seat to the magic. Pictures started to flood social media of full shopping trolleys, children's clothes, blankets, the car back on the road. Pride and work readiness merged, and women had a chance to get glasses, to get a haircut, to respond to their health needs, to take a big step and to start planning for their future. This included enrolling in courses, buying suitable work clothing, getting access to the internet. Their future was back in their hands demonstrating clearly that willingness was not the issue as much as the lack of capacity.

Pride and hope entered single mother households and it stayed for six-months. An unnecessary cruelty was to remove it.

Was it wrong to expect that a Women's Budget would and should focus on some of our poorest women, women who are giving it their all?

We need to restore access to the Single Parenting Payment for families with a child or children under 16 years. Currently poor women are thrown onto Jobseeker when their youngest child is 8 years and characterised as not having a job. Raising children is a full-time, critical job and many of these women have a child with a disability and the life effects of living with abuse and violence.

We can no longer support a system that forces women to return to the place of abuse and to the hands of the abuser because of a completely inadequate income support system. All payments that single parent families access need to be lifted, by at least 20%. This is a down payment in respect.

We are staggered that the child support debt which is **\$1.6 Billion** has not garnered the attention that it warrants. This tax and child support avoidance runs counter to the government's narrative on parental responsibility and allows financial abuse of women to continue.

We support the abolishment of the costly and prejudicial 'Third Party Verification' process and the promise that women who have experienced family

National Council for Single Mothers and their Children Inc.

Eliminate and respond to violence, hardship and inequality for single mothers and their children.

✉ PO Box 2238, Hilton, 5033
www.ncsmc.org.au

P 08 8354 3856

E ncsmc@ncsmc.org.au



violence and interact with the Social Security system will only have to tell their story once, avoiding constant re-traumatisation.

Other positives include increased access to women`s legal services and we warmly welcome the individual domestic violence packages. We have argued for this for a long time and now say, it is not a trial we need but the full package straight away.

We also say; bring on the Women`s Summit and the Women`s Task force as there is still much to do.

NCSMC is calling for a seat at the table. Leave no woman behind.

Media Comment Terese Edwards 0439211493