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Budget announcements a step in the right direction for vulnerable households

Queensland's peak body for the affordable housing and homeless sector, Q Shelter, welcomes important initiatives in the Federal Budget which address housing need and cost of living pressures but also urges further steps to accelerate the planning and delivery of housing around the nation.

'It is clearly a budget seeking to support people with cost-of-living pressures, which is commended,' said Fiona Caniglia, Q Shelter's Executive Director.

'The challenge is to accelerate the planning and delivery of housing around the nation that meets current and emerging population demand as well as the impacts of likely inward migration of over 660,000 in the two years to 2025.'

'But we welcome increases in Job Seeker payments, including lowering the threshold for people older than 55.'

'A \$20 per week increase is a step in the right direction, but these increases don't go far enough to address growing poverty, particularly as costs of living rise'.

'Without a healthy housing system, any cost-of-living measures will be eroded by lack of housing availability and reducing affordability.'

The Federal Budget also includes an increase in Commonwealth Rent Assistance, which the social and affordable housing sector has long been calling for.

Fiona Caniglia says the increase in Commonwealth Rent Assistance is welcome news but cautions that legislated reforms are also necessary to protect this gain.

'While the sector has called for a rise in Commonwealth Rent Assistance, this has potentially negative impacts without legislated limits to rent increases and without adequate housing supply to meet population demand.'

'While increased rent assistance may help community housing providers cover the increasing costs of rates, insurance and maintenance, there is a risk of negative impacts on people in the private rental market who are constantly vulnerable because of low supply and no limits to how much rents can rise'.

Q Shelter also welcomes a commitment to develop a National Urban Policy to address the many challenges faced by major cities'.

'We need this so we can embed strategies for housing supply and affordability, access to employment and transport, measures to address climate impacts, and the need for energy reforms'.

'On this note, energy efficiency measures in the Federal Budget are welcome. Low-interest loans for energy-saving home upgrades will help people reduce energy costs. \$300 million in funding to cut energy bills through technology upgrades for tenants in social housing is an important innovation.'

'Increased Medicare bulk-billing initiatives will also mean that some vulnerable Australians won't be forced to continue choosing between vital healthcare and housing costs.'

Q Shelter also notes previously announced measures such as reduced taxes for build to rent initiatives which will help facilitate restructuring the private rental market towards institutional investment.

'We also commend the increase in the NHFIC liability cap of the Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator by \$2billion which will enable more low-cost loans to community housing providers.'

ENDS

Media comment

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About Q Shelter

For over 35 years, Q Shelter has worked as a peak body to improve housing outcomes for Queenslanders. Over this time, we have remained an unwavering voice for solutions through advocacy, strategic engagement and capacity building.

Besides influencing solutions and policy, Q Shelter provides professional development and shares resources to assist other organisations to be effective, so that our combined capacity to respond to housing need is strengthened.