



Welfare Rights Centre

A community legal centre specialised in social security law and its administration by Centrelink

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Welfare Rights Centre's response to the 2017 Budget.

The Welfare Rights Centre (WRC) welcomes the Federal Government's removal of the \$13 billion in zombie cuts and the \$263 million investment in the employment programs proposed in the 2017 Budget. However, the WRC opposes the Government's implementation of harsher welfare crackdown measures which vilifies people on social security. The 2017 Budget unfairly targets the most vulnerable members of society who are in most need of assistance.

Making it more difficult to claim and remain on a social security payment is unfair and puts further pressure on those who are already financially stressed. The WRC expects an even larger number of people to contact the Centre for assistance at a time when it is already struggling to meet current demand.

Specifically, the WRC opposes the Government's proposed drug testing of 5000 people who are unemployed. This proposal intrudes on people's privacy and will penalise people who refuse to take the test. The Government should adequately fund drug and alcohol rehabilitation services rather than taking this punitive approach. Moreover, the government's proposal to trial the program in areas that already have established rehabilitation services does not ensure the success of the initiative in communities without these services.

Coordinator/Principal Solicitor, Katherine Boyle, said "the 2017 Budget unfairly targets and penalises those who require assistance from the Government. The people who come to us need support not drug testing. Rather than making it harder for people to claim social security payments, the Government should focus on the primary issues of job shortages and address the inadequacy of income support payments."

Media contacts:

Welfare Rights Centre – Amrita Saluja 9211 5300