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Welfare Rights Centre's response to the Budget 2018/2019.

The Welfare Rights Centre (WRC) welcomes the Federal Government's proposal to relax the Parental Income Tax for regional students, enabling easier access to Youth Allowance. However, the failure to increase the rate of Newstart Allowance means people who rely on this payment are subject to ongoing poverty. WRC also strongly opposes the Government's punitive measures against migrants and refugees.

One of the biggest failures of the Budget is the Government's inability to recognise the inadequacy of the rate of Newstart and Youth Allowance. The Government has failed to acknowledge what a struggle it is for our clients to live off \$38 a day.

This dismissal is further evidenced by the Government's proposed harsh measure to dock Centrelink payments from those who are unable to pay fines. New South Wales already has a fine repayment system in place. This is a punitive measure which places further pressure on people who are already struggling to make ends meet. Not only is this unfair it risks pushing welfare recipients into homelessness or other compromising positions.

Another fundamental disappointment of the Budget is the Government's commitment to pursuing 'robodebts' despite the debts having no lawful foundation.

WRC disagrees with the harsh measures against migrants and refugees, in particular the imposition of a four-year waiting period to access vital income support. The Budget unfairly targets some of the most vulnerable members of our society. WRC Coordinator/Principal Solicitor, Katherine Boyle states that "at our Centre we already see the terrible impact the two year waiting period has on our clients. Our clients sleep in garages and cars whilst waiting for the two year waiting period to end."

WRC expects that as a result of the measures in the Budget, an even larger number of people will contact the Centre for assistance at a time where the Centre is already struggling to meet current high demand.

The Centre's Coordinator/Principal Solicitor, Katherine Boyle, said "the 2018 Budget will make life even harder for our clients who are already struggling to survive. Our clients are already desperately poor. The Budget proposals will just make this worse."

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