

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## The next WA Budget must leave no-one behind

“Targetting intensive support the most excluded in our society is a critical element of building a more productive post-resource economy in Western Australia,” said Irina Cattalini, CEO of The WA Council of Social Service today.

The Council’s 2016-17 WA Pre-Budget Submission *Leaving No One Behind: A Brighter Future For Our Children, Families and Community*, released today, argues that indiscriminate cuts to services and a focus on ‘core business’ and costly acute services could have unintended consequences across the service system that lead to increasing costs in the longer term.

“Genuine, long-term cost saving for Government are best achieved by reducing the demand on expensive statutory services through effective early intervention programs delivered by community services.”

“Our Submission presents seventeen budget recommendations that represent a total investment of \$382 million per annum, less than 1.3% of WA’s total Budget expenditure. The majority of these recommendations focus on putting downward pressure on future costs, reducing reliance on acute services and increasing the participation in our economy and community of those most excluded.”

“For those on lower incomes, Western Australia’s recent economic circumstances have seen increasing levels of unemployment and underemployment, more workplace insecurity and more tenuous tenancies - leaving many struggling to meet rising daily living costs.”

“WA needs to look at innovative new models, such as New Zealand’s social investment approach, which uses an actuarial analysis of projected long-term welfare costs for specific at risk groups to enable investing in targeted services that transform life outcomes,” she said.

“We need a stronger focus on children. The early years of a child’s life is critical for life-long development and yet WA does not have a truly state-wide children’s services plan.”

“WA has seen a 40% increase in children taken into care during this term of government, with Aboriginal children now accounting for 53% of children in out of home care, despite being less than 5% of the population.”

“Intensive family support services that help keep kids safe and provide assistance before there is a need for statutory intervention can deliver better outcomes for children and families and reduce the rising costs of child removal. Building the capacity of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations can help engage and deliver better outcomes to some of our most marginalised families.”

“Together we can build a brighter future for our children, families and community - but it will take all of us working together to make it happen,” concluded Ms Cattalini.

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