

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **2022 Federal Budget Response**

ConnectGroups strongly welcomes the Federal Government's allocation of \$330.6 million to improve health outcomes for women and girls, and in particular the \$58.3 million to improve diagnosis, treatment and support towards Endometriosis and pelvic pain. Having worked closely with its member groups Endometriosis WA and the Gynaecological Awareness Information Network (GAIN Inc.) who provide peer support to people living with debilitating gynaecological conditions, ConnectGroups has seen much need for more support services, and is pleased to hear this announcement of funding. ConnectGroups also welcomes the \$2.4 billion for new and amended Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listings, which will enable more affordable access to medicines to support people living with chronic health conditions.

The Federal Government has allocated half a billion dollars over the next five years towards Stage 2 of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan, and ConnectGroups is pleased to see \$42.3 million over four years for Lifeline and \$14.8 million over five years for Headspace included in this allocation, supporting suicide prevention and improved youth mental health outcomes. ConnectGroups would like to have seen further investments in men's mental health, LGBTIQ+ and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. While it is positive to see an investment of \$8.6 million over three years to establish a Closing the Gap Policy on social and emotional wellbeing and \$2 million to support justice reinvestment programs, there is still much work to be done in addressing the disproportionate rates of incarceration, deaths in custody and systemic injustices faced by Australia's First Nations People.

The continued investment in home care packages and services for older people is welcomed, with a further \$468.3 million allocation, but it is disappointing to see no increase to aged care worker wages, particularly following last year's aged care royal commission report which indicated an under-recognised, over-burdened, underpaid, and under-skilled aged care sector.

It is pleasing to see the Federal Government changing up the Paid Parental Leave (PPL) Scheme, enabling parents to choose how they allocate leave, providing fathers with more of an incentive to take parental leave, and promoting equality between mothers and fathers. ConnectGroups hopes to see more work around reducing the gender pay gap, which still acts as a strong deterrent for fathers taking PPL due to men typically being the higher earners in relationships.

While the Federal Government has announced one-off payments of \$250 to support pensioners, carers, veteran, job seekers, and eligible concession cardholders, there has been no movement on the ongoing JobSeeker payments, which continues to offer inadequate income support. The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), with the support of the community services sector, have been advocating for the past two years to raise JobSeeker payments through its Raise the Rate campaigns, and it is disheartening to see that the Federal Government have not taken action in increasing the \$46/day payments which do not provide sufficient support. The budget has focused on temporary fixes and, in a time of poverty, inequality, and housing crises, there is a need for strong long-term strategies to support our most vulnerable communities.

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