

Highlights of the 2022-23 October Federal Budget Measures

In the Australian Treasurer's Budget speech, a commitment was made to beginning a new discussion about "measuring what matters", stressing the importance of the "strength of our economy and the well-being of our people". A Measuring What Matters Statement will be released in 2023 following consultation with stakeholders and experts.

The Treasurer referenced recent disasters in his speech and highlighted that the Government will fund Disaster Relief Australia to deploy more than 5,000 extra volunteers when future disasters strike.

Volunteering and Community Connectedness

The 'Volunteering and Community Connectedness' funding stream contains funding for various programs including the Volunteer Management Activity and Volunteer Grants. Allocated funds for Volunteering and Community Connectedness in the October 2022-23 Budget are \$81,000,000 (2023-24), \$59,128,000 (2024-25), and \$59,132,000 (2025-26)¹.

Volunteering and not-for-profit sector reform

The Government is asking the Productivity Commission to review the current framework to incentivise philanthropy in the not-for-profit sector, and the Department of Social Services will work with the not-for-profit sector to develop a sector led not-for-profit Blueprint. This is described as "a roadmap towards providing the not-for-profit sector with support and strategic direction to expand their services in coming years"².

Wellbeing and measuring what matters

The Treasurer spoke about measuring what matters in his speech and Budget Paper No. 1 includes Statement 4 (Measuring What Matters) which discusses different wellbeing approaches across the world. There is no wellbeing framework, or metrics, proposed for Australia. Volunteering is not discussed in the document but Table 4.1³ shows 'civic engagement' is included in all international wellbeing frameworks bar one (Scotland) and 'social capital' is included in all the cited wellbeing frameworks.

The Government has committed to releasing a new stand-alone Measuring What Matters Statement in 2023. The Government said it will continue to research and consult experts and other stakeholders on what the Statement should measure, how the Statement should link to other frameworks and goals – including at the state and territory level – and how the Statement should be communicated⁴.

¹ DSS Portfolio Budget Statement

² Budget Paper No. 2

³ Budget Paper No. 1, see page 125

⁴ Feedback can be provided at www.treasury.gov.au/consultation/measuring-what-matters-2022

Volunteering-related funding

- The Government is investing up to \$200 million per year on disaster prevention through the Disaster Ready Fund (\$1 billion over the next five years from 2023-24). It will support investment in projects including flood levees, sea walls, cyclone shelters, evacuation centres, and fire breaks. (No mention of social infrastructure.)
- To assist with future recovery efforts, the Government is providing \$38.3 million to Disaster Relief Australia for more than 5,000 **volunteers** to help communities when disaster strikes⁵. The Budget papers describe how this boost to volunteer capacity will help communities better prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and will supplement state and territory resources. They state that increased volunteer capabilities will provide an alternative to reliance on the ADF⁶.
- The Government will provide \$560.0 million over four years from 2022–23 to support Community Sector Organisations at need of funding supplementation due to additional staff wages pressures and higher inflation outcomes.
- The Commonwealth Home Support Program is being extended to the support at home program commencement (30 June 2024), to provide continuity for over 800,000 older people who access the program⁷.
- The Government will provide \$2.5 billion over four years from 2022–23 to reform the aged care system through a raft of measures flowing from the Aged Care Royal Commission. This includes expanding the Community Visitors, with the transition to the new **Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme** model from 2023–24.
- There will also be \$810.2 million for additional support for aged care providers to manage COVID-19 outbreaks and \$34.9 million to continue in-reach testing for residential aged care facilities until 31 December 2022.
- The Government is providing over \$2.6 billion to adapt Australia’s COVID-19 response to the current state of the pandemic. This includes funding to ensure continued supplies of personal protective equipment and access to vaccines and treatments for at-risk cohorts⁸.
- The Government is investing \$1.8 billion in the environment. This includes:
 - \$90 million to employ and upskill up to 1,000 Landcare Rangers which aims to “scale up grassroots efforts of **volunteers** and provide career pathways in the land care sector”.
 - \$1.1 billion for the next phase of Natural Heritage Trust funding, which will prioritise support for species and landscapes, Indigenous Protected Areas and conservation activities for heritage and wetlands areas, and sustainable resource management.

⁵ Budget Paper No. 1

⁶ Home Affairs Portfolio Budget Statement

⁷ Health Media Release

⁸ PBS Health

- The Government will provide \$5.0 million over three years from 2022–23 to the Surf Life Saving Australia’s Beach Safety Equipment Fund for the purchase of surf rescue and medical supplies⁹.
- \$19.4 million is being provided to extend the Disability Employment Services (DES) program for two years. Incorporating consultation to date, Government states the extension will allow for a design phase to better support people with disability to find ongoing employment.
- The Government is establishing a review of the NDIS, which will cover the scheme’s design, operation, and sustainability and aims “to build a stronger, supportive market and workforce to ensure the NDIS is effective”.
- The Government has committed \$7.4 billion to support regional development across Australia. This includes:
 - Establishing two discrete, time-limited programs to deliver commitments in suburban and regional locations – Investing in Our Communities Program (\$349.9 million) and the Priority Community Infrastructure Program (\$1.0 billion). These programs aim to deliver local community, sport and infrastructure commitments of varying scales.
 - \$1.0 billion on developing regions through programs that are tailored to the varying needs of regional communities across Australia. At the local level, community groups and local councils will be able to apply for funding under the Growing Regions Program. This will support community and economic infrastructure developments and upgrades, such as libraries and community centres.
 - \$5.0 million is allocated to support the Regional Australia Institute’s research and policy capacity
- \$1.3 million is being provided over two years from 2022–23 to fund peak community organisations to undertake consultations with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Asexual (LGBTIQ+) people to understand barriers to accessing health services. The Government will also provide additional funding to QLife to recruit **volunteer** peer support workers¹⁰.
- The Government will provide \$1.0 million over two years from 2022–23 to conduct a review of Australia’s multicultural policy settings to support efforts to further strengthen social cohesion¹¹.
- The Government will provide \$20.0 million over four years from 2022–23 to provide more flexible delivery options for the Adult Migrant English Program and increase case management support to students. (AMEP tutors are **volunteers**.)
- The Government will provide \$36.8 million over four years from 2022–23 (and \$1.0 million per year ongoing) to support the arts sector. Funding includes: \$22.0 million in 2022–23 to establish a Live Performance Support Fund to support eligible live event organisers affected by COVID-19.

⁹ Budget Paper No. 2

¹⁰ Budget Paper No. 2

¹¹ Budget Paper No. 2

- The Government stated it is advancing discussions with Queensland regarding support for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, which it describes as offering significant social, sporting, and economic benefits for Australia¹².
- Funding of \$4.9 million over four years from 2022–23 for the Community Business Partnership program has ceased¹³.
- The Government will provide \$12.7 million over four years from 2022–23 to the Department of Social Services to improve access to services that enhance community wellbeing. Funding includes:
 - \$12.4 million over four years from 2022–23 to support community playgroups and toy libraries to expand services, including new First Nations and intergenerational playgroups, as well as upgrade facilities and purchase materials
 - \$0.4 million over two years from 2022–23 to support the organisation Short Back and Sidewalks to provide haircuts free of charge to people experiencing homelessness.

Other national priorities

- Funding of \$75.1 million will be provided to prepare for the delivery of a referendum to enshrine a First Nations Voice to Parliament in the Constitution. The Government will also \$5.8 million to commence work on establishing an independent Makarrata Commission.
- The Government is working with First Nations people and state, territory, and local governments to drive sustained progress on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This includes \$314.8 million to support the Government’s commitment to close the gap for First Nations peoples’ health and wellbeing outcomes, \$100.0 million for housing and essential infrastructure in Northern Territory homelands and \$99.0 million to support improved justice outcomes.
- \$1.7 billion is allocated to support implementation of the new National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–32. In addition to \$1.3 billion in funding to support women’s safety, the Government is committing \$169.4 million to fund 500 new frontline service and community workers to support women in crisis and investing \$65.3 million for consent and respectful relationship education. The Government is also legislating 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave for all types of employees.
- As part of the implementation of Respect@Work inquiry, the Government is also providing \$32.0 million to support funding for Working Women’s Centres in every state and territory. The Centres support women by providing free advice and assistance on issues including workplace sexual harassment, discrimination, and wage theft.
- Following the September Jobs and Skills Summit, an Employment White Paper will be released in the second half of 2023. This Budget aims to deliver on some of the summit outcomes, including a one-off \$4,000 credit to the Work Bonus income banks of Age and

¹² Health Portfolio Budget Statement

¹³ Budget Paper No. 2

Service pensioners in 2022–23 to give older Australians the option to work and keep more of their money.

- The Government is establishing ‘Jobs and Skills Australia’ to strengthen workforce planning and combat skills shortages. The Government says this independent consultative body will work with “employers, unions, states and territories, and the training and education sector”. It aims to provide detailed labour market analysis and workforce planning to combat workforce shortages.
- The following measures are additional funding announced since the previous budget relating to mental health and suicide prevention:
 - \$15.5 million in 2023–24 to continue to support the Department of Veterans’ Affairs to engage with the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (the Royal Commission) following the extension of the Royal Commission reporting date to 17 June 2024.
 - The Government will provide \$24.3 million over four years from 2022–23 (including \$6.6 million per year ongoing) to improve access to mental health services, including expanding the national network of headspace services
 - The Government will provide \$203.7 million over two years from 2022–23 to provide a funding boost to every Australian school to help address the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on student wellbeing. Funding will enable the provision of additional mental health and wellbeing support for students, such as mental health professionals, sporting and social activities, and proven student wellbeing and mental health initiatives. Funding also includes \$10.8 million for a free voluntary mental health check tool to assist teachers and schools to identify students with, or at risk of, declining mental health. The tool will be developed in consultation with experts, states and territories, peak bodies and school communities, and be implemented with parental agreement.