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Victoria's 2026-27 Budget fails North West Victoria

Mallee Family Care has expressed deep disappointment with the Victorian Government's 2026-27 State Budget, saying it falls well short of what is needed to address the entrenched and growing disadvantage faced by communities across North West Victoria.

Chief Executive Officer Teresa Jayet said the budget lacks the vision, ambition and structural investment required to meaningfully improve the lives of people living in one of the state's most essential yet most overlooked regions.

"North West Victoria grows the food that fills the plates of Melburnians and communities across this state. Our region contributes enormously to Victoria's economy and food security, yet the communities who make that possible are living with some of the highest rates of disadvantage in the country. This budget does nothing to change that. That is not just a missed opportunity - it is a failure of equity."

Ms Jayet acknowledged that some short-term relief measures - such as car registration rebates and temporary fuel excise reductions - may benefit some Victorians, but said they do little to address the systemic causes of disadvantage in regional communities.

"A one-off discount on car registration is a temporary band-aid on a deep wound. And offering free public transport as a cost-of-living measure for people in the Mallee - where there is little to no public transport - is simply out of touch with our reality. These measures were designed with metropolitan Melbourne in mind. Regional Victorians deserve better than being an afterthought."

Mallee Family Care expressed particular concern for young people in the region, who face a compounding crisis of unaffordable housing, uncertain employment pathways and limited access to education and services - with no meaningful response from this budget.

"Young people in the Mallee are growing up in communities where housing is increasingly out of reach, where local jobs are insecure and seasonal, and where the services and opportunities that young people in cities take for granted simply don't exist. This budget offers them nothing new. We are setting an entire generation up to fail, and then wondering why we see the social consequences."

Mallee Family Care noted that despite brief mentions of Mildura in the context of an Aboriginal justice pilot and the Mallee in an environmental water management program, the budget contains no dedicated investment in the social infrastructure, services or economic opportunities that North West Victoria urgently needs.



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The organisation pointed to critical gaps including inadequate housing supply and support services, limited financial counselling and legal aid access, insufficient early childhood and family support services, and a near-complete absence of investment in place-based responses to entrenched disadvantage across the region.

"You cannot solve systemic disadvantage with one-off payments and short-term programs. It requires sustained, place-based investment in the communities where people actually live. The Mallee has been overlooked in budget after budget. The people we work with - families doing their best in incredibly difficult circumstances - deserve to see their government invest in their futures, not just their electricity bills."

Mallee Family Care is calling on the Victorian Government to commit to a long-term, adequately resourced strategy for addressing disadvantage in North West Victoria - one that recognises the region's unique needs and its significant contribution to the state.

"We will continue to advocate loudly and clearly for the communities we serve. They grow the food, they sustain the land, they hold this state together - and they deserve a government that invests in them accordingly. We stand ready to work with government to build that future. But first, government has to show up," Ms Jayet said.

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About Mallee Family Care

Mallee Family Care is a dedicated, place-based community service organisation that has been supporting the regional, rural and remote communities of North West Victoria, Far West NSW and South Australia's Riverland region since 1979. With around 300 staff delivering more than 70 programs, MFC supports thousands of people across the Mallee each year, providing vital services in areas including family and youth support, mental health, financial counselling, tenancy advocacy, legal assistance, early childhood education and care, and disability services.



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