

30 January 2026

The Hon Jim Chalmers MP
Treasurer of Australia
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600 Australia

Dear Treasurer,

In the 2026-27 Budget, the Federal Government has an opportunity to build on the strengths of communities and families to deliver a significant shift in the way our country addresses inequality. When Australians are struggling with the cost of living, government expenditure must be targeted to deliver strong outcomes for the Australian people. Prevention and early intervention offer a dual benefit for governments, particularly in a tight fiscal environment. They improve outcomes for individuals and communities, while reducing demand for tertiary services. PeakCare urges the Commonwealth to act in partnership with key national organisations and initiatives we support, including the End Child Poverty Campaign, the National Foster Care Sustainability Group, and Families Australia.

A strong evidence-base demonstrates the profound social and economic benefits of **early intervention and prevention**, particularly when supports are community-led and tailored to the needs of local populations.¹ PeakCare supports Families Australia's call for sustained Commonwealth investment in prevention and early intervention that strengthens families and reduces the need for statutory child protection intervention. This includes expanding investment in practical community-based family supports, fully funding the implementation of Safe and Supported, providing long-term funding for family preservation services, and measuring success by family stability and wellbeing.

PeakCare also urges **increased investment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations** (ACCOs). Evidence consistently shows that ACCOs deliver more effective and culturally safe services when funding and decision making are led by community. This evidence is echoed in both the national Family Matters reports and academic reviews, which suggest when funding, accountability and policy authority shift closer to community and culture, services are more effective.² PeakCare and Families Australia stand together with the ACCO sector, calling for long-term recurrent funding, genuine self-determination and shared decision-making, workforce and sector investment, and strengthened Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led child safety and justice services.

Ending poverty must be a national priority, and we must put children at the centre of reform. PeakCare is a member of the **End Child Poverty** Campaign, supporting its central ask to legislate a child-centred definition and multidimensional measure of poverty, alongside national targets and regular public reporting.³ PeakCare also supports the positions of Families Australia and the Australian Council of

¹ Curtis, P., Glover, B., & O'Brien, A. (2023). The preventative state: Rebuilding our local, social and civic foundations. [Demos](#)

² Connected Beginnings | Early Years Program. [SNAICC – National Voice for our Children](#).

³ End Child Poverty, The Valuing Children Initiative. [End Child Poverty](#)

Social Services (ACOSS) to raise JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and Parenting Payments, and to index these payments so they do not erode over time.

Stronger safeguarding systems are also urgently needed. The shocking extent of serious failures in safeguarding children in early learning settings which have been made public in recent years have highlighted serious system weaknesses. Findings of the 2025 State of Australian Children Report call for decisive action to strengthen accountability, oversight, and the broader systems designed to keep children safe.⁴ Queensland's *"In Plain Sight"* Report also highlighted findings that demonstrated systemic weaknesses: siloed information, fragmented responsibilities, insufficient thresholds for action, and a lack of coordinated safeguarding architecture. PeakCare supports Families Australia's call for national minimum safeguarding standards, improved integrated systems, and investment in trauma-informed workforce training and supervision.

PeakCare is a founding partner of the **National Foster Care Sustainability Group**, and we call on the Australian Government to deliver a "fair go" for children in foster care and their carers.⁵ With significant changes occurring in the demographics of foster carers across the nation, those carers who open their homes and hearts to our most at risk and vulnerable children deserve to be recognised through strengthened financial support, including the introduction of a national Health Access Card for children in care.

We also call on the government to direct the Australian Tax Office to clarify and update guidance on tax-free carer allowances so that all jurisdictions and providers can increase payments without imposing tax burdens on volunteer carers. This change would support carer attraction and retention, enhance children's access to everyday opportunities, and improve stability in home-based care.

Committed and caring governments have led Australia and the world through the introduction of paid family leave, paid domestic and family violence leave and now this government can adjust the National Employment Standards to help foster carers in paid employment start or continue fostering. Carers fulfil a parenting-type role but are not currently afforded the same rights as parents. Introducing up to 16 weeks paid carer leave, as the NSW Government have done, would support the establishment of new children coming into care, reduce employment disruption and enhance stability for children. This reform will benefit carers, employers and governments through improved workforce participation, reduced turnover and better outcomes for children in care.

PeakCare is committed to continue to support the Australian Government in building Australia's future. There is nothing more directly linked to the future than providing all children in Australia the opportunity to thrive, regardless of where they grow up. If the Albanese government is genuinely committed to addressing entrenched, intergenerational disadvantage experienced by families and their children and communities, then PeakCare and Families Australia are committed to helping deliver on that commitment.

⁴ The State of Australian Children 2025, [Unicef and Aracy](#)

⁵ Future of Foster Care, The National Sustainability Working Group. [Sustainability Group | FutureofFosterCare](#)

PeakCare welcomes the opportunity to discuss these proposals with any relevant ministers and looks forward to working with the government on an ambitious agenda to build Australia's future and improve the lives of all Australian children and families.

Yours sincerely,



Estelle Abela
Interim Chief Executive Officer

