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MEDIA RELEASE

## WA Election: Major Parties Miss the Mark on Poverty

The Western Australian Council of Social Service has released a State Election scorecard, which reveals that the two major parties have widely missed the mark on tackling issues of poverty and inequality in Western Australia, with only the Greens receiving better than a failing score.

“Like all Western Australians, I am incredibly grateful for the actions taken by the Premier McGowan and his team to keep us safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as his government’s actions on family and domestic violence, their work with the sector on the homelessness strategy, and their commitment to support young people stay in foster care to the age of 21. All sides of politics have made a number of welcome commitments this election. But the vision for social justice from both major parties simply does not go far enough,” said Louise Giolitto, Chief Executive Officer.

“It is disappointing that despite having the strongest budget in the nation, WA Labor has chosen to squander this opportunity to make significant strides and much needed investment in social and affordable housing, in creating quality jobs in the care economy and improving the pay and conditions of essential care workers, and in addressing child poverty.

“If now isn’t the right time to genuinely address poverty and inequality in our state, it raises the question as to when would they possibly think it is?

“We have a looming rental crisis approaching rapidly and yet the presumed victors are going to the election silent on this issue, and with by far the least ambitious plan for social housing.

“Despite both major parties announcing targets to increase jobs in specific industries, they have no clear commitments that take seriously the importance of the care sector and recognises the role that its highly women-dominated workforce has in our economy.

“Child poverty is rarely talked about, but remains the biggest single factor affecting early childhood development. Our political parties need to maintain focus and support for children and families most in need, but ensure that efforts are directed towards early intervention and support before those problems become too complex, entrenched and expensive to resolve.

“Further, we cannot address inequality without ending the over-representation of Aboriginal people in our justice system. Aboriginal people must be given a direct voice on how the system operates, but no party is promising the independent, Aboriginal-led oversight necessary to make that a reality.

“No party has committed to implementing the state-wide community connector model proposed by the sector to provide a localised response that assists people seeking to access services and opportunities in their community.

“Poverty and hardship were entrenched for parts of our community before COVID hit. Getting life back to what it was before is simply not good enough. We need a vision for something truly better.”

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