



MEDIA RELEASE

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Report on Adequacy of Newstart provides a blueprint for reform

St Vincent de Paul Society National Council CEO Toby oConnor has urged the Federal Government to seriously consider the recommendations outlined in the Federal Parliament's Community Affairs References Committee's report on its Inquiry into the Adequacy of Newstart and Other Related Payments.

'If implemented collectively, the 27 recommendations in the report would make a significant difference to the lives of many people living below the poverty line in Australia and support people into the benefits of fuller participation in the Australian economy,' Mr oConnor said.

'The much higher rate of Jobseeker paid in response to the COVID-19 pandemic recognises that the low rate of Newstart is not acceptable to the Australian community at a time when more people are moving into unemployment.

'The National Council supports the introduction of a mechanism to establish and index payment rates for allowances, pensions and supplements and the provision of additional support and measures to address long-term disadvantage and long-term unemployment.

'The report highlights a number of issues raised in the National Council's submission, including the call for an inquiry into the adequacy of the Commonwealth Rent Assistance Program, a review of Youth Allowance and increases in funding for emergency relief housing and social housing.

'We welcome the call for the Australian Government to reduce out-of-pocket medical costs for low income earners and people on income support.

'The National Council supports an immediate review of the earnings threshold for people on income support payments and an inquiry into mutual obligation requirements for people who are unable to work due to a medical condition or disability.

'A review of the Parenting Payment for single people and Family Tax Benefit-Part B to help alleviate the poverty experienced by many families is also welcomed.

'The National Council supports the call for the Social Security System Expert Group to review the social security system and provide advice to the Federal Parliament on how to achieve better outcomes and increase economic participation.

'The Society would welcome the opportunity to participate in any forum as the Federal Parliament considers the recommendations,' Mr oConnor said.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 conferences located in individual parishes across the country.