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MEDIA RELEASE

Federal Government's JobSeeker decision condemns thousands more people to poverty

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia has repeated its call for the Federal Government to establish an expert advisory group to monitor and advise government on appropriate levels of income support to ensure no one is forced to live in poverty.

Speaking shortly after the rushed passage of the *Income Support Bill* through the Federal Parliament, National Council President Claire Victory said such important decisions must be informed by the evidence, and not driven by political ideology.

'A parliamentary inquiry, extensive research and the recent COVID-19 experience all demonstrate the benefits of increasing the base rate of JobSeeker and Youth Allowance.

'The social service sector, academics and big business all support a higher rate, but the Federal Government has failed to act appropriately.

'An additional \$4 a day will make little difference and demand for assistance from services such as ours will simply escalate in the coming months.

'Each reduction in the Corona Supplement in recent months has seen a corresponding increase in requests for assistance from the Society.

'Until the expert group is established the National Council is calling for an increase of \$25 a day – not \$25 a week – bringing JobSeeker and Youth Allowance in line with the aged pension.

‘Once established, working age payments must be indexed in line with wages, which have historically grown at a faster rate than CPI, thus maintaining the real value of those payments.

‘Australia is on the cusp of significant change – with JobSeeker set at \$44 per day, JobKeeper winding up and the moratorium on evictions and freeze on mortgage payments being lifted in the weeks ahead.

‘Underemployment increased in the last month to 8.5 percent and we expect that as these changes kick-in, more people will need the help of family, friends, community and charities to get by,’ said Ms Victory.

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

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