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Australians need to vote for fairness and the party that will act on entrenched hardship and poverty

The entrenched poverty, loss of opportunity and inequality that nearly 3 million Australia live with every day has not been adequately addressed by either of the major political parties as we enter the official election campaign, according to the head of one of Australia's leading social service groups.

Mr Francis Sullivan, Chair of Catholic Social Services Australia said today that neither major party has demonstrated any clear and focused policies to alleviate the systemic plight of people living on the fringes of our communities.

"We should never forget these same people are our neighbours, our families and our friends who, because of misfortune or birthright, struggle when the rest of us are sharing in the benefits of our country's prosperity," Mr Sullivan said.

"In six weeks the Australian community will get to make a choice between one or other of the major parties that can demonstrate it is able and willing to address the long-term systemic causes of hardship and poverty that millions of Australians live with every day.

"For decades millions of Australians have watched as their share of the national wealth has got smaller and smaller.

"In real terms, NDIS packages have been reduced, unemployment and health benefits eroded while at the same time some 3 million Australians, including nearly 750,000 children, now live in poverty.

"The NDIS, social and emergency housing, domestic and family violence, the plight of Indigenous communities, entrenched poverty are all major challenges that should be front and centre of the policy agendas of both the Coalition and Labor.

"While it is one thing to vote for a better life for ourselves and our families, it is another thing to vote so that we all can prosper.

"If this election comes down to a referendum around personalities then we will have failed the first test of how our community can prosper as one.

"So let's not get drawn into the confected campaign but rather insist on the issues of the widening gap in our society being directly addressed by all parties," Mr Sullivan said.

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