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## MEDIA RELEASE

### JOBSEEKER CALL IS BRUTAL AND UNNECESSARY

The decision of both major parties not to lift JobSeeker is brutal and has relegated millions of Australians to continuing to live under the poverty line, said the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Yesterday, Labor confirmed it will go to the federal election with a policy that maintains the JobSeeker payment of just above \$640 per fortnight for a single person without children – an identical position to that of the Coalition.

St Vincent de Paul Society National President Claire Victory said the decision was both cruel and unnecessary.

'It is crushingly disappointing that voters at this election will not be able to choose a party of government that wants to lift Australia's brutally low JobSeeker rate,' Ms Victory said.

'It is simply immoral for a nation as wealthy as Australia to allow millions of people to languish beneath the poverty line.

'We're constantly told that lifting the JobSeeker rate would act as a disincentive to work, but the research doesn't bear that out and in my decades of engaging with people experiencing poverty I'm yet to find anyone who's able to work but chooses to remain on JobSeeker. It's clear that the current JobSeeker rate is actually designed to punish people.'

Ms Victory said while it was understandable that both parties were cautious about increasing national debt, there were ways to boost JobSeeker without impacting the budget bottom line.

Recent modelling by the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, commissioned by the St Vincent de Paul Society, found an increase to JobSeeker of \$150 per fortnight, along with a 50 per cent increase to Commonwealth Rent Assistance, could be easily paid for through minor tax changes that would only marginally affect highest income-earners.

'This research shows there is no justification for being so brutal with people who cannot find sufficient work. While acknowledging the need to be cautious about adding to national debt, there are many ways Australia could fund a boost to JobSeeker that lifts recipients out of poverty and restores their dignity, without affecting the budget bottom line.

'There is abundant wealth in this country to fund an income increase to those who most desperately need it. The fact that neither party has the political courage to advocate for such a change is deeply disappointing.'

The St Vincent de Paul Society's Federal Election statement includes a suite of practical and compassionate policies to create [A Fairer Australia](#).

*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.*

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