

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **St Vincent de Paul opposes drug testing people on income support**

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society has reiterated its opposition to efforts to expose people on income support to mandatory drug tests, stating again that the proposal is not supported by current evidence and may have high social and economic costs.

As the Federal Parliament announced its intention to reintroduce the Bill which lapsed at the end of the last Parliament, Toby oConnor, St Vincent de Paul National Council CEO said talk of drug testing deflects attention from addressing underlying structural factors that drive inequality and poverty.

‘We know that drug testing is expensive. We believe it’s discriminatory and it stigmatises and scapegoats people who receive income support,’ Mr oConnor said.

‘The Bill has previously stalled twice in the Senate amid concerns about unfairness,’ he said.

The Government now intends to reintroduce the Bill which, if passed, will see drug-testing trialed for two years for around 5,000 new recipients of Newstart and Youth Allowance in Canterbury-Bankstown (NSW), Logan (Qld) and Mandurah (WA).

‘The Government has not revealed the full cost of implementing the trial. However, the \$10 million in funding earmarked for support services in the three trial sites is inadequate and would be better spent on addressing unmet need for alcohol and drug services, which is estimated to cost \$1.2 billion,’ Mr oConnor said.

‘Rather than demonising people who are out of work, governments must step up their efforts to work with the community and unemployed people to create more paid work and more real pathways to employment,’ Mr oConnor said.

Read our briefing on the issue [here](#).

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

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