

# MEDIA RELEASE

24 September 2019

## At what price this surplus?

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society is disappointed by the Federal Government's plan to revive its failed 2017 attempts to force people applying for social services support to exhaust modest savings or double the wait time for payments before applying for Newstart and other essential payments.

Commenting on the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Payments Integrity) Bill 2019*, National Council CEO, Toby oConnor said changes in the so named Payments Integrity Bill are likely to have most impact on older Australians, single parents and people with disability.

'The Government appears to be sending a message that discourages self-reliance,' he said.

'The Bill will effectively force displaced mature-aged workers to deplete their asset base – a process in conflict with the current policy aim of ensuring financial independence into retirement.

'Existing on Newstart is already tough enough. The payment is inadequate. This Bill is designed to make things even tougher.

'The measures will contribute to deeper poverty and financial instability by forcing people to deplete modest savings, or go into debt before being able to access income support.

'Making it more difficult for people who have fallen on hard times will not account for the fact that there are not enough jobs to go around, especially for particular groups of people.

'As the Budget moves to surplus, we must ensure we do not leave anyone behind – especially those who need a hand up.

'Unemployment has risen and the number of available full time, secure jobs is falling.

'Safety nets generally, are being undermined and the most vulnerable people are paying dearly for these public policy failures.

'Measures outlined in this Bill may provide a short-term gain for the budget bottom line, but they will deliver long-term costs by further exacerbating the conditions in which people enter into poverty and long-term unemployment', Mr oConnor said.

Read our Payment Integrity Bill 2017 Submission [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.*