



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## People need enough to live on and a place to call home

The St Vincent de Paul Society's National Council has called on the Federal Government to maintain JobSeeker and JobKeeper until an expert group has been established to provide advice on payment rates that keep people out of poverty.

Either the current JobSeeker rate should be retained (an additional \$560 per fortnight) or the payment should match existing aged and disability pensions (an additional \$370 per fortnight) but people should not be forced back to the old Newstart rates.

In its submission to the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 and the Australian Government's response to the pandemic, the Society also called for an investment of at least \$7.7 billion into social housing.

CEO, Toby oConnor said that the turnaround in the lives of people who have received the higher level of financial support, and those who received access to accommodation and wrap around services, form part of the silver lining to come out of the pandemic.

Speaking specifically about the impact of the pandemic on service demand and the Society's response, Mr oConnor said that in general, people seeking support during the pandemic are new and have not accessed charitable assistance before.

'They include young people, people living with disability, people on temporary visas, people in casual employment and international students,' he said.

'Service models have changed significantly in response to the pandemic, with an increased online presence and virtual/contactless support being provided,' he said.

In its submission, the Society also called for:

- a flexible approach to contract administration during the pandemic;
- suspension of the next stage of tax cuts and exploration of other tax options, such as a review of the GST and superannuation laws;
- development of a national housing affordability and homelessness strategy;
- investment in better energy efficiency and energy management and the *Healthy & Affordable Homes: National low-income energy productivity program*;
- processes that increase the uptake of state energy concessions for gas, water, electricity and council rates;
- an exemption for charities from the \$50 million turnover limit for the application of the code of conduct for small and medium enterprises commercial leasing principles;
- national minimum standards for renters and landlords for managing tenancy issues;
- access to medical treatment and Medicare and a financial safety net for people seeking asylum;
- bipartisan support to develop a national anti-racism strategy;
- emergency exemptions and provisions to be included in the Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines and the Commonwealth Procurement Rules; and



- a review of the fundraising laws by the Australian Law Reform Commission as they are no longer fit for purpose.

The committee is due to report by 30 June 2022.

A copy of the Submission is available on the St Vincent de Paul [website](#).

*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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