

MEDIA RELEASE

Vinnies welcomes extension of JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments but there are questions about equity

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The St Vincent de Paul Society's National Council has welcomed the extension the JobSeeker and JobKeeper programs by the Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Treasurer Josh Frydenberg in Canberra today, but warned that the principles of equity and fairness must not be put to one side in the face of this economic crisis.

Existing arrangements for JobKeeper and JobSeeker will remain in place until the end of September after which time JobKeeper will be extended to March 2021 and JobSeeker will be extended to December 2020.

Speaking shortly after the announcement, St Vincent de Paul National Council CEO, Toby oConnor acknowledged the valuable assistance provided to people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic to date and that it was always clear that the economy would not sustain that level of assistance long-term.

But he questioned the different timeframes for the extension of both payments, and the reintroduction of mutual obligation requirements.

'At the end of the day, COVID affects everyone and both those payments should be in place till the end of March. It's not clear why the JobSeeker arrangements have only been extended to December this year.

'I would also challenge the need to reintroduce mutual obligation requirements at a time when unemployment is rising with only one job available for every 13 people looking for work.

'No details have been released about the extent to which mutual obligation requirements will be increased in September.

'The reintroduction of the assets test should be put on hold in the short- to medium-term.

'Let's hope we see a permanent increase in JobSeeker in the budget later this year.

'If we are to emerge strongly from this crisis we must ensure nobody is left behind.

'Even prior to pandemic, poverty and inequality in Australia were entrenched.

'Income inequality in Australia is higher than the OECD average, with more than one in eight adults and more than one in six children living in poverty.

'People must not be forced back to living on \$40 a day once this pandemic subsides,' Mr oConnor said.

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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