

Catholic Welfare Australia

Media Release



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Job Network initiatives overshadowed by concern for the most vulnerable

“New initiatives in Job Network designed to assist the long-term unemployed may be overshadowed by the new regime to automatically suspend welfare payments,” Executive Director of Catholic Welfare Australia Mr Frank Quinlan said.

“The whole Job Network will welcome wage subsidies and increased places for special needs programs such as Open Employment. These initiatives will provide more options for the very long term unemployed.”

“We join other church providers in expressing our grave concern that the new ‘three strikes and you’re out’ welfare payment suspension regime including immediate and automatic suspensions, administered by Job Network members, may leave the poorest in the community vulnerable to real risks,” said Mr Quinlan. “‘Three strikes and you’re out’ means exactly that - you are out of home, out of food, out of clothes and even further excluded from society.”

“When you live on welfare you are poor, many families surviving on less than \$250 a week. We were desperately hopeful that this Budget would bring about a better life for the many Australians who do not share in this country’s record levels of employment and prosperity,” said Mr Quinlan.

“What parents, people with disabilities or the older and long term unemployed need are real opportunities for work,” he said. “Looking at the current Work for the Dole program, the Government’s own data shows that only 14% of those who complete the program end up in full time jobs.”

“Our vast experience in the Job Network proves conclusively that supportive programs, customised to individual needs and delivered with respect, are more successful than punitive approaches,” Mr Quinlan said.

“This new regime means church agencies would be delivering housing assistance, food parcels and other support to people stripped of their only source of income. It is unacceptable for the Government to implement such a harsh regime without thorough investigation of the consequences and necessary safeguards,” concluded Mr Quinlan.

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