



TIME FOR AN INDEPENDENT ENTITLEMENTS COMMISSION

Catholic Social Services Australia has repeated its call for the establishment of an independent Entitlements Commission to set and review pensions and other income support payments on an annual basis.

Executive Director, Frank Quinlan made the call today as ACOSS released a report that shows Indigenous Australians, unemployed people, sole parents, people with disabilities and older Australians who rent privately are regularly unable to pay for items like utility bills and prescription medicines.

“Over \$8 billion in bonuses is being paid to pensioners and some other people on social security benefits from today, which is welcome, but this is not a long term solution to the adequacy of entitlements and pensions,” Mr Quinlan said.

“Successive Australian governments have avoided making judgments about what an acceptable living standard for Australians on benefits might be.

“The current system is full of anomalies born of random payments and bonuses that arise out of political whim and historic accidents rather than good social policy.

In setting adequacy benchmarks the Entitlements Commission would consider:

- the goods and services necessary to live in reasonable comfort, maintain dignity and take part in the life of the community;
- the contribution of in-kind government support provided through measures such as the Seniors Card, Medicare, public housing and subsidised rent and transport;
- differences in the cost of living between income support recipients who own their own homes or have access to public housing and those who rely on the private rental market;
- differences in the cost of living for income support recipients in different geographical areas;
- differences in the cost of living for income support recipients living in different family/household types.

Catholic Social Services Australia provides services to over a million Australians each year through its 66 member agencies in remote, regional and metropolitan Australia.

A copy of the paper is available at: <http://www.catholicsocialservices.org.au/node/14718>

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