
MEDIA RELEASE

MAJOR CHURCH PROVIDERS WELCOME MEETING WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Major church providers have expressed optimism ahead of a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard in Sydney today where they will discuss measures to help limit the impact of the Global Financial Crisis on vulnerable Australians and the social services they rely on.

The meeting will consider the recommendations from the major church providers Summit in Canberra late last year, including key findings of the Access Economics report released at the Summit.

The report found that 80,000 people were turned away last year from unemployment programs, crisis accommodation and financial assistance because of a lack of funding, and estimated that up to 140,000 Australians could lose their jobs in the coming year as a result of the Global Financial Crisis.

The Summit noted that demand for social services, particularly emergency relief and financial assistance, was already increasing as a result of the Global Financial crisis.

The Summit recommended that:

- Government establish a Crisis Response and Recovery Taskforce to track and respond to the impact of the Global Financial Crisis on vulnerable Australians and social services. The taskforce should include representatives of government and the social services sector and advise both the Prime Minister and the Council of Australian Governments.
- Government urgently commit additional financial resources to meet both existing unmet need, and the rising demand for assistance resulting from the Global Financial Crisis.
- Government take measures to prevent those experiencing hardship for the first time becoming chronically engaged in the social services system. Such measures should include action by banks and other lending institutions to prevent people facing foreclosure from losing their homes. These measures would complement direct action to assist those already disadvantaged.
- The community sector (or not for profit organisations) should be given a seat on the Infrastructure Australia Board to ensure that the needs of vulnerable and low income Australians are central to the Board's deliberations.

The four major church social service provider networks provide the majority of social services in Australia. Spokespeople include:

Anglicare Australia
Catholic Social Services Australia
Salvation Army
UnitingCare Australia

Kasy Chambers, Executive Director
Frank Quinlan, Executive Director
David Eldridge, Australia Southern Territory
Lin Hatfield Dodds, National Director

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