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## MEDIA RELEASE

### MAJOR CHURCH PROVIDERS SAY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROCESS NEEDS OVERHAUL

Major Church Providers of social services in Australia have called for an independent review of the process for allocating employment services contracts, following the release today of the Jobs Services Australia contracts.

“Today’s decision challenges the nature of the relationship between the Government and the non profit sector which increasingly provides outsourced social services,” said Frank Quinlan, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Australia.

While a number of church agencies have won Jobs Services Australia tenders, the group registered concern at the number of agencies across the community sector which lost business despite impressive performances.

“Today’s news sends a worrying message to community sector agencies,” Mr Quinlan said.

“This is one of the first opportunities the Government has had to demonstrate their commitment to a compact or a new way of working with the community sector. It doesn’t bode well.

“How can it be in the interests of either unemployed Australians or the sector to be shutting down services and opening new ones in the midst of the greatest employment crisis in a decade?

“Short term contracts, perverse funding incentives and government silos are the basis of the problem.

“Not-for-profit community sector agencies pride themselves on their relationships with and commitment to their local community. Through these relationships the community sector harnesses community good will and attracts volunteers.

“Non profit agencies invest in staff, buildings and other infrastructure and enormous amounts of goodwill in order to add value to outsourced social services.

“Many agencies have historically provided a range of integrated services to the local community. Employment services are an ideal point from which people can access services such as relationship and financial counselling services and emergency relief.

“Whether you’re a winner or a loser, DEEWR has treated long standing, successful providers with absolute disrespect during the process.

“The failure to provide clear advice regarding the process and the results has left committed workers in the lurch for weeks.

“These agencies have been successfully providing government services for more than a decade, but are still not treated as partners,” Mr Quinlan said.

*The major church provider networks provide the majority of social services in Australia.*

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