



CSSA 2009 FEDERAL BUDGET RESPONSE

Catholic Social Services Australia's Executive Director, Frank Quinlan, has welcomed the increased benefits for pensioners in tonight's Federal Budget but said the Government has missed an opportunity to address the disparity that exists across Government benefits.

Mr Quinlan said there's a plan to escape fiscal deficit but no plan to escape social deficit.

The single rate of many pensions increased by \$32.49 a week, taking the base rate to around \$318 a week.

"But the base rate for single parents remains at \$285 and Newstart has stalled at just \$227, an astonishing \$90 below the single base rate for most pensions," Mr Quinlan said.

"On incomes as low as these people don't just need a plan for the future, they need assistance for today. This is simply not enough to make ends meet.

"A litre of milk costs the same, regardless of the source of a person's income.

"Nobody disputes the fact that pensions are inadequate. We welcome the increase to most pensions announced tonight and the increase in the allowable work benefit to \$500 a week.

"But in good times and bad, governments have consistently overlooked the needs of some of the community's poorest people, including the long-term unemployed.

"Resourcing additional payments comes down to priorities.

"Catholic Social Services Australia has renewed its call for the establishment of an Australian Entitlements Commission which would set and index social security payments independently of the government of the day, in a similar way to the operations of the Australian Fair Pay Commission or the Commonwealth Remuneration Tribunal.

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

"Social security payments are currently set according to political whim. It's time to take the politics out of payments and ensure all Australians have an adequate income for a dignified life," Mr Quinlan said.

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

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