



ADDITIONAL PAIN INFLICTED ON THE NEEDIEST AUSTRALIANS

9 May 2017

“This year’s Budget has once again imposed unnecessary additional pain on the neediest Australians, who through no fault of their own are unable to work hard to secure better days,” Catholic Social Services Chief Executive, Father Frank Brennan said today.

“Tonight, the Treasurer has said that the government is choosing to ‘focus on growing our economy to secure more and better paying jobs’ while at the same time conceding that there will be no increase in the labour market participation rate.

“Unemployment, which is presently sitting at 5.9%, is forecast to fall to only 5.5% by 2018-19. Even with optimistic projections, the government is expecting that unemployment will come down to only 5.25% by 2020-21.

“This concession makes the new mutual obligation rules for the unemployed and other welfare recipients punitive and onerous.

“Struggling Australians are being further targeted through the demerit system and random drug testing.

“While I am relieved to see an increase in the Medicare Levy to ensure the NDIS is fully funded and housing proposals which may help ordinary Australians, it’s difficult to demonstrate our national commitment to mutual respect, equality and the fair go when the unemployed are still to be treated punitively.

“This Budget night too many of our young people are facing a future where they are locked out of the job market having to survive on the inadequate NewStart allowance of \$535.60 per fortnight,” Fr Frank Brennan said.