



St Vincent de Paul Society
NATIONAL COUNCIL *good works*

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MEDIA RELEASE

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St Vincent de Paul Society urges Senate to block attack on people with a disability

The St Vincent de Paul Society is urging the Senate to reject a government proposal that will deny access to the Disability Support Pension (DSP) for people with a disability caused by drugs or alcohol.

“This is a cruel and vindictive attack on a small but extremely disadvantaged group of people who struggle with chronic substance abuse,” said Dr John Falzon, CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council.

The changes were flagged by Treasurer Scott Morrison in the 2017 Federal Budget, and are part of a raft of punitive measures targeting social security recipients. Unless a disallowance motion is passed when the Senate votes on Wednesday, the changes to DSP will take effect from 1 July.

“This measure will simply force people into deeper poverty,” Dr Falzon said.

“It is based not on medical evidence but on meanness.

“It is calculated to punish and exclude people who are living with a chronic disability.”

The proposed changes will also affect people with co-occurring disabilities, such as mental illness or intellectual disabilities, who will now be ineligible for DSP unless they can demonstrate their substance use problems have been fully diagnosed, treated and stabilised.

“Targeting people in this way will simply push those who are battling addictions further to the margins of society,” said Dr Falzon.

“Access to the Disability Support Pension should be based on need, not a stigmatising mentality or judgments about deservingness.”

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