



JOBKEEPER PACKAGE VITAL TO THE CHARITABLE SECTOR

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Catholic Social Services Australia supports the government's Jobkeeper announcement, but says amendments will be necessary to protect thousands of jobs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Charitable organisations that receive funding through government grant programs will find it difficult to demonstrate the required loss of overall turnover to qualify for the Jobkeeper activities if those funds are counted as part of the organisation's turnover," CSSA chief executive officer Ursula Stephens explained.

"Many of our organisations have multiple funding streams. They are contracted to provide government-funded programs – some of which have to stop or be adapted under the social distancing measures.

"But our organisations also provide fee-for-service funding in areas like home care, aged care, supported living, early childhood, out-of-school hours care and the NDIS. Fundraising efforts have also fallen away and some are having to replace volunteers with paid staff to maintain contracted services."

Dr Stephens said unless a solution is found to support the charitable sector, thousands of jobs will be lost in areas such as early childhood, NDIS and aged and home care services.

"That would be devastating and would put at risk the delivery of vital care and support work to the most vulnerable in our community as COVID-19 continues to spread," she said.

Dr Stephens said the JobKeeper wage subsidy measure "is as bold as it is big". She said keeping employees attached to their employer is a critical economic policy that will support a speedier recovery and limit the number of people, especially older workers, lost to the Australian workforce – as occurred in the recession of the 1990s.

"However, this policy needs to be implemented strategically for it to work. It needs to be flexible and nimble to achieve its goal of keeping as many people as possible out of unemployment queues and attached to their current employers," Dr Stephens explained.

"We ask the Government to provide sufficient flexibility in the determination of turnover to maximise the availability of this crucial measure for charities and not-for-profits that will be affected by impacts of COVID-19 well after the rest of the economy is recovering.

"We are calling on governments at all levels to designate community services as essential services and provide support, including access to personal protective equipment and sanitising equipment. Addressing these issues will enable more charities to hold on to their employees and continue to support their communities once we are through this COVID-19 pandemic.

"When the Parliament next meets to pass the package, it must ensure that jobs in the charitable sector are protected," Dr Stephens concluded.