



10 February 2021

MEDIA RELEASE

Fair Work Bill must be put on hold

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia has called on the Federal Government to put consideration of the Fair Work Bill on hold until a report on related legislation has been tabled in June this year.

In a submission to the Federal Parliament this week, National Council President, Claire Victory, said the Society is concerned about the timing of the Fair Work Bill given that the Senate Standing Committee on Economics' *Unlawful underpayment of employees' remuneration* inquiry's final report is not due until 24 June 2021.

'In its current form, the Fair Work Bill strongly favours big business at the expense of already vulnerable workers and does nothing to restore job security, improve workers' pay and conditions or address wage stagnation,' Ms Victory said.

'The Federal Government must urgently consider significant labour market reform to ensure vulnerable workers have access to meaningful, long-term employment in the wake of the pandemic.

'The Society is particularly concerned about the increasing casualisation of the workforce and what this means for job security and workers' rights.

'Consultations must recommence with a range of stakeholders, including not for profit organisations.

'Of particular concern are the definition of 'casual' and 'limits to casual conversion', the capacity for the Fair Work Commission to approve agreements that do not meet the Better Off Overall Test, few opportunities for arbitration of disputes, the two-year extension of 'flexible work directions', and the inadequate new national criminal offence for the underpayment of wages.

'Unemployment is unlikely to improve in the short term, especially for young people, further fueling growing inequality in the Australian community.

'Low-income workers in retail, transport, aged care, cleaning and security services (hotel quarantine) are often paid at or below the minimum rate, employed on a casual basis with no leave entitlements and forced to take on extra jobs to make ends meet.

'This Bill exacerbates inequality by reinforcing insecure work and increasing casualisation of the workforce.'

The Committee is due to report by 12 March 2021. A copy of the National Council's Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment regarding the *Fair Work Amendment (Supporting Australia's Jobs and Economic Recovery)* Bill 2020 is available [here](#).

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.

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