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MEDIA RELEASE

JobSeeker is part of our recovery plan

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia today reiterates the call for the Federal Government to raise the rate of JobSeeker as a permanent feature of the income support system.

Speaking as the Federal Parliament considers the base rate of JobSeeker this week, National President, Claire Victory added her voice to the many politicians, business leaders and other advocates who say the payment must never again fall below \$50 a day, or \$700 per fortnight.

'The progressive cuts to the coronavirus supplement have pushed a further 560,000 people back into poverty', Ms Victory said.

'We urge the government to appoint an expert advisory group to advise the Federal Government on the levels of social security payments, including unemployment benefits, needed to keep people out of poverty.

'The expert advisory group must include all major stakeholders.

'One of the essential stakeholders must be a representative from the major charities who have worked collaboratively with the Government to respond to the Black Summer Bushfires and the COVID-19 emergencies.

'Until an expert advisory group is established, the rate of JobSeeker should align with pensions which, for a single person, is around \$920 per fortnight.

'Although the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook provided a faster than expected labour market recovery, it is estimated to take four years for employment to return to pre-pandemic levels.

'A permanent increase to JobSeeker would improve the lives of many people, and stimulate economic growth, as those who have the least are more likely to spend available funds on life's essentials.

'Blaming and shaming unemployed people for their circumstances is easy and politically convenient, but it is not helpful,' Ms Victory said.

The solution to the complexities faced by unemployed people must include:

- A permanent rise to the base rate of jobseeker to a minimum of \$50 a day
- The establishment of an independent expert group to advise the Federal Government on adequate payments which will keep people out of poverty
- A policy response which acknowledges the long-term recovery from the pandemic and the increase in insecure job

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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