



## Bishops welcome minimum wage rise

A pay rise of 4.75 per cent for almost three million workers is welcome.

Earlier this year the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference argued for a 5 per cent rise in the national minimum wage via a submission to the Fair Work Commission.

The commission today announced the national minimum wage would be increased to \$1004.90 per week, or \$26.44 per hour, from 1 July. This represents an increase of 6 per cent for thousands of Australia's lowest paid workers.

Modern award wage rates will rise by 4.75 per cent from the same date.

Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service delegate for employment relations Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green said the decision would offer real relief to those affected by the rising cost of housing, energy and everyday essentials.

Bishop Columba acknowledged the Fair Work Commission's effort to find the right balance in its decision.

He said the Church had long supported the protection of workers and the need to ensure work upheld human dignity.

"As Pope Leo XIV said in his recently released teaching letter, *Magnifica humanitas*, 'work is not simply an instrument; it expresses and enhances the dignity of our lives'," Bishop Columba said.

"Our goal must be, as Pope Leo states, to 'enable each person to live with dignity through his or her own work', as well as ensure there is just compensation for that work."

Based on original economic research by ACU Associate Professor Tom Barnes, the bishops' submission argued the Fair Work Commission should gradually eliminate the gap between the national minimum wage and the national poverty line for sole parents/carers with two dependent children.

The commission should also seek to substantially narrow the poverty gap for couples with dependent children, the submission said.

”In its decision, the Fair Work Commission acknowledged that a substantial real wage gap exists in Australia; that is, a gap between wages and the cost of living,” Associate Professor Barnes said.

“It also argued that this year’s increase in the minimum wage is designed to begin reducing this gap over time. This is a development that should be welcomed by all who desire an end to poverty among working people.”

The Catholic Church is one of the largest private sector employers in the country, employing more than 220,000 people in health, aged care, education, social services and administration among other areas.

About three-quarters of these employees are covered by enterprise agreements with the balance covered by awards made by the Fair Work Commission.

The Church has been a long-standing advocate for workers’ rights, providing submissions on the minimum wage for decades.

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