



GPO Box 1947  
Canberra ACT 2601  
admin@cssa.org.au

T 02 6285 1366  
F 02 6285 2399  
[www.cssa.org.au](http://www.cssa.org.au)  
ABN 18 810 059 716

22 September 2016

Mr Stephen Palethorpe  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Education and Employment Committees  
PO Box 610  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Palethorpe

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Bill 2016*, and the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2016* currently before the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee. Our submission focusses specifically on the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2016*.

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) is the Catholic Church's peak national body for social services. Our vision is for a fairer, more inclusive Australian society that reflects and supports the dignity, equality and participation of all people. Our 53 member agencies are the frontline service providers caring for and directly assisting some 450,000 people across 650 sites nationally.

CSSA does not support the budget savings outlined in the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2016* (FTB Bill) to fund the Jobs for Families Child Care Package. It is our view that there are other policy options available to the Government to fund the Child Care Package and which would not result in the reduction of payments to the most vulnerable families and individuals in our community.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has recently restated its long held position that the burden of budget repair should not fall upon the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community. The measures contained in the FTB Bill do just that by removing almost \$6 billion from the pockets of Australian families. The rate of poverty is growing with an estimated 2.5 million people or 13.9% of all people living below the internationally accepted poverty line<sup>i</sup>. Disturbingly 600,000<sup>ii</sup> children now live below the poverty line. Cutting payments to low income households is neither morally nor economically justified and as such we strongly oppose the passing of the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill 2016*.

The significance of these proposed cuts does warrant closer attention by this Committee as to their impacts on the household incomes of Australian families. The absence of such analysis and modelling should give this Committee cause for concern. Accordingly CSSA recommends that the Committee seek such modelling from the Department of Social Services as part of its deliberation process. We believe it is in the interests of this Committee and public more generally to understand the impacts of these cuts to their household incomes, particularly at a time where wages growth is low and the costs of raising a family continues to grow.

Please find attached our previous submission to the earlier Senate Inquiry that considered essentially similar measures seeking to cut Family Tax Benefits. For further information on this submission please contact our Director of Economic Policy, \_\_\_\_\_ on Tel \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

**Marcelle Mogg**  
Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>i</sup> ACOSS 2014 [Poverty in Australia Report](#)

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid*