

Antipoverty Centre Submission to the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes No.1) Bill 2026 inquiry

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Committee Secretary,

We are writing in relation to the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes No.1) Bill 2026 inquiry. We are unable to make an extensive submission in the extremely limited time provided, however we want to draw the committee's attention to some key areas of concern.

The Antipoverty Centre requests that the committee properly scrutinise Schedule 3 of the bill regarding employment income attribution rules. We are also concerned about the increasing use of retrospectivity in social security legislation, where it has been used in other parts of the bill.

It seems the Department of Social Services and current government also have a serious problem with transparency and there has not been any clarity around Schedule 3, which directly affects a person's access to social security. If the government has been operating yet another unlawful system where people are eligible to compensation for refused payments or debts incorrectly issued they must be upfront about it.

We request that the committee, through this inquiry, seek further information about why these amendments have been proposed and how the changes may impact welfare recipients other than Child Support recipients.

Further, we encourage committee members to interrogate the following items noted in sections 1.196 and 1.197 of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights scrutiny report, which states:

“(a) the objective sought to be achieved by the measures;

(b) why the current formula for income attribution is insufficient; Explanatory memorandum, p. 41.

- (c) how the measures operate to ensure that a person is not deprived of the minimum essential levels of food, health, housing, education and standard of living;
- (d) how many individuals are likely to be affected by the measures;
- (e) whether the measures could result in an individual receiving less social security, and if so whether this reduction in social security entitlements is significant;
- (f) what safeguards accompany the measures, for example access to review;
- (g) whether there is flexibility to account for the merits of an individual case; and
- (h) whether the measures could disproportionately impact certain vulnerable groups, such as women, people with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, such that they may engage and limit the right to equality and non-discrimination and the rights of people with disability.”

We again urge the government to immediately scrap all partner and parental income tests. These barriers to accessing social security payments force adults to be dependant on others in their life, removing their agency, placing strain on relationships and in some cases creating the conditions for violence.

Partner and parental income tests are paternalistic and outdated. If the government is serious about supporting and protecting people affected by family and domestic violence, this one policy change would transform many lives by enabling people to have a degree of financial independence and the ability to leave an unsafe home

As housing costs eat up more and more of our incomes and other living costs rise, a significant number of people have come to rely on shared housing to survive. The rules that determine whether a person is in a de facto relationship are nearly indiscernible from the circumstances of people who cohabit for other reasons in the 21st century..

Tweaking rules that force financial dependency on adults cannot end the psychological, emotional and other harms caused by forcing financial dependency on adults.

Regards,

Jay Coonan

Co-coordinator, Antipoverty Centre.