

20 March 2019

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

Anglicare Australia is a network of independent local, state, national and international organisations that are linked to the Anglican Church and are joined by values of service, innovation, leadership and the Christian faith that every individual has intrinsic value.

As an organisation that speaks for the country's most disadvantaged people, we are disappointed that opportunities to tackle poverty have been overlooked in favour of other priorities – from company tax cuts to exemptions for those who don't need them.

As this term of government draws to an end, we are seeking commitments through this open letter to ensure the next term of government focuses on making Australia fairer – and helping every Australian to lead a dignified life.

Australia has never been more prosperous, yet we are also a nation facing growing inequality. Nearly three million Australians live in poverty, and wealth inequality is now the worst it has been in seventy-five years.

More must be done to create jobs and help people participate. We are encouraged by your proposed changes to the Jobactive network, and hope you will go further to develop a more person-centred system. We hope you will also invest in direct job creation programs. These are needs that have been highlighted by Anglicare Australia's Jobs Availability Snapshot.

Another 800,000 people who rely on income support are struggling daily to afford basic essentials like a roof over their head and food on their table. That includes parents, carers, people with disabilities, students, and those who have been locked out of paid work.

People cannot pursue a better life if they are forced to make tough choices between eating a meal and paying a bill, buying shoes for their children and filling prescription. And they cannot look for work if they are homeless and hungry.

Our safety net has become a poverty trap, with rates of Newstart, Youth Allowance, and related payments stagnant for 25 years. One-off payments and tax cuts will not lift people out of poverty. Raising the rates of these payments would be the most powerful step that any government could take to reduce poverty in Australia.

This is not the only change we need to make Australia fairer. Having a place to call home is a basic human need, yet even those working full-time are struggling to put a roof over their heads. Even in the midst of a so-called market downturn, Australians are still spending record amounts on housing.

The most recent figures show that people are spending more of their incomes on rent and housing than ever – and those numbers are only going up. Anglicare Australia's own Rental Affordability Snapshot has shown that affordability has been going down over the last ten years, and that the private rental market is failing those most in need.

That is why Anglicare Australia echoes the call made by the Everybody's Home campaign for government action to create 500,000 affordable homes. That should include 300,000 social and Aboriginal housing properties. This call is based on research into the shortfalls in the housing market. We call on you to work with your State and Territory counterparts, and make this investment for those who simply can't get a home through the private market.

We understand that any government faces competing priorities, and that there are many worthy calls on public funding. But we also believe that what a government funds is a reflection on what it values. Our own research, released last year, shows that Australia foregoes \$68 billion each year in subsidies to the wealthiest Australians.

If we can afford to forego this revenue, then we can surely afford a safety net, a secure home, and a dignified life for every Australian.

We look forward to your response to these priorities. And we thank you for the work you have done over the last term of government, particularly your reforms to superannuation for people on low incomes and the initiation of the landmark Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

We look forward to working with you in the next term of parliament, and hope we can work together towards a fairer and more equal Australia.

Best regards



Kasy Chambers
Executive Director
Anglicare Australia

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