

Via www.pm.gov.au

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 one-off payments, tax cuts, and tax offsets.

As you prepare for the coming election, 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. Over three million Australians live in poverty, and wealth inequality is now the worst it has been in seventy-five-years.

Although Australia's economic recovery has been strong, there is a hidden unemployment problem facing the nation. More must be done to create jobs and help people participate. Around one million Australians are looking for work. Another 1.2 million are looking for extra hours. There are just 259,000 job vacancies across the country. We hope you will invest in direct, Government-funded job creation programs – a need that has been highlighted by Anglicare Australia's most recent Jobs Availability Snapshot.

More must be done to support job seekers. Over one million 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 and paying bills. And they cannot look for work if they are homeless and hungry. Yet the base rates of Jobseeker, Youth Allowance, and related payments have been below the poverty line for over two decades. One-off payments and tax offsets will not lift people out of poverty. Raising the rates of these payments is the most powerful step that any government could take to reduce poverty in Australia. Indeed, you achieved the single largest reduction in poverty in the nation's history after introducing the temporary Coronavirus Supplement.

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. With housing costs soaring, Australians are spending record amounts on housing.

The most recent figures show that people are spending more of their incomes on rent and housing than ever. Anglicare Australia's own Rental Affordability Snapshot continues to show 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.

Finally, Anglicare Australia is deeply concerned about dignity in old age and the need for quality care. Every Australian deserves quality care, and this can only be delivered by a strong workforce. We hope you will build on your historic response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety by committing to fund the outcome of the Fair Work Value Case before the Fair Work Commission, and by supporting a Workforce Partnership Fund.

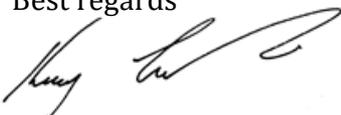
We understand that any government faces competing priorities, and that there are many worthy calls on public funding. But we also believe that what a government funds is a reflection on what it values. Our own research shows that Australia foregoes \$68 billion each year in subsidies to the wealthiest 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 important work in keeping Australia safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

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