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The Hon Peter Dutton MP
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Dutton

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 seeking commitments through this open letter focused on making Australia fairer – and helping every Australian to lead a dignified life should you form government.

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 as highlighted by Anglicare Australia's recent *Widening the Gap* report.

Although Australia's job market is thought to be strong, there is a hidden unemployment problem facing the nation. Over 800,000 Australians are looking for work. Another 1.7 million are looking for extra hours. Yet, there are just 344,000 job vacancies across the country. More must be done to create jobs and help people participate. 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*.

In the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, more must be done to support people on the very lowest incomes. 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 living with disability students, and those who have been locked out of paid work.

People cannot pursue a better life for themselves or their families 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. As the previous Coalition Government demonstrated through its stewardship of the COVID-19 pandemic, raising the rate of these payments is the most powerful step any government could take to end 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. With 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 plummeting for the past fifteen years, and that the private rental market is failing those most in need.

Should you form Government, we urge you to maintain the Housing Australia Future Fund and expand on it with a direct investment in social housing. A major investment is needed to end the nation's shortfall of 640,000 social homes. 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, older Australians have waited long enough for the quality care and support they need to age with dignity. We warmly welcome your support of the Government's aged care reform agenda, and eagerly await the commencement of the new Aged Care Act – but the work is far from over. Older Australians are still facing lengthy waits for the care they need. Over 80,000 people are waiting for a home care package and some could be forced to wait up to 15 months. There must be an ongoing commitment to create meaningful change in the lives of older Australians.

Each of these priorities is vital to building a fairer and more prosperous Australia. We note that First Nations peoples are on the forefront of many of these national challenges, and that action in each of these areas is key to ensuring the success of the bipartisan Closing the Gap strategy.

We look forward to your response to these priorities.

We hope to work with you in the coming months, and hope we can collaborate towards a fairer and more equal Australia.

Best regards

Kasy Chambers
Executive Director