



FROM THE COALFACE IN ANTI-POVERTY WEEK

This year in Anti-Poverty Week, the National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society highlighted case studies that demonstrate the extent and severity of hardship faced by people living on Newstart. Anti-Poverty week was held this year from October 13 – 19.

Members and volunteers working in St Vincent de Paul Conferences in local communities around the country say that in their experience insecure housing, inaccessible health care, social isolation, stigmatisation and inadequate transport are some of the issues faced by people trying to find work.

The case studies were included in the National Council's submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Adequacy of Newstart and Related Payments and detail the experience of eighteen people living on Newstart.

CEO Toby oConnor said most of the studies do not have neat endings but against the odds, most people show a strength of spirit, a willingness to give back to their communities and an optimism that defies the hardship they face on a daily basis.

'We know there are no quick fixes, particularly for long term unemployed people, who represent just over three quarters of Newstart recipients,' he said.

Conference members said in addition to a significant increase in Newstart, wrap-around support services and case management assistance would help some of the most vulnerable job seekers.

They also called for improved access to practical skills-building courses such as budgeting, financial counselling and life skills training; and better targeted training taking into account a person's age and skill set, that would actually lead to a job. They said free childcare while looking for jobs, and subsidies for those who want to move for work (for example, seasonal work) would also provide practical support.

'At a time when the number of people looking for work far outnumber available jobs, the government might heed calls from the growing number of individuals from all walks of life to raise the rate of Newstart by at least \$75 a week,' Mr oConnor said.

A copy of the case studies is available [here](#).

More information can be found on the St Vinnie's website [here](#) and on the anti-poverty week website [here](#).

The St Vincent de Paul Society has 60,000 members and volunteers who provide on the ground assistance in over 1,000 Conferences located in individual parishes across Australia. The Society is underpinned by the principles of social justice and is committed to identifying the root causes of poverty in order to contribute to their elimination. We provide help to all in need by alleviating suffering and promoting human dignity and personal integrity.

Judith Tokley