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Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
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Dear Committee Members,

Re the Inquiry into Social Security Legislation Amendment (Youth Jobs Path: Prepare, Trial, Hire) Bill 2016

Thank you for inviting submissions to assist your consideration of this bill.

The demands of a rapidly changing modern Australian economy are proving profoundly testing for a significant proportion of young Australians. Youth unemployment – at around 13 per cent nationally – now sits at double the rate of overall unemployment. The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) welcomes the introduction of the Prepare, Trial, Hire (PaTH) program as a positive investment in addressing this issue, by providing young unemployed people with the opportunity to gain the real world work experience they need to move into employment.

The BSL supports the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Youth Jobs Path: Prepare, Trial, Hire) Bill 2016. The legislation will enable the successful implementation of the PaTH program by ensuring young jobseekers on income support receive an additional \$200 per fortnight to compensate them for costs involved in undertaking a PaTH internship (e.g. transport).

The BSL's experience of working with unemployed young people indicates that the vast majority of the young people that PaTH is targeting face multiple challenges to participation in mainstream social and economic life. Most will be early school leavers who are highly disengaged from both education and the labour market. They often lack social connections and face additional non-vocational barriers.

In the modern economy that emphasises skills and workplace experience, for them the transition from school to work is highly problematic. They often have little knowledge of vocational options available to them, lack insight into their natural aptitudes, have an inadequate knowledge of workplace expectations, and lack rudimentary vocational skills. Opportunities to gain the work experience that employers value are routinely denied them. In short, most are simply not ready for what is expected of them in the workplace.

Our experience shows that a critical part of creating pathways into sustainable employment for these young jobseekers is the chance to undertake real world work experience. They need opportunities and support to develop networks with employers, build their skills in a real world

setting and acquire first-hand knowledge of workplace expectations and requirements through work experience that is matched to their strengths and interests.

We believe the PaTH program is a critical part of the ongoing investment from the Australian Government, employers and the community that will ensure the potential of these young people is not wasted.

The Brotherhood stands ready to assist the Committee in its work. Please contact my office on [redacted] if we can help further.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Nicholson
Executive Director