



The Salvation Army

Australia Southern Territory Headquarters

Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Email community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

The Salvation Army Australian Southern Territory submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee on the:

Family Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011

The Salvation Army Australian Southern Territory would like to table our serious concerns in relation to:

1. The proposed amendments to the Disability Support Pension (Schedule 3) that will require people to test their future work capacity by participating in training or work-related activities in order to qualify for the disability support pension (DSP).
2. The seriously compressed timeframes being imposed for the tabling of amendments to social security and other 'welfare' legislation that restricts consultation and input from the sectors that provide a voice to the most disadvantaged and marginalised members of our communities.

As a member organisation, The Salvation Army Australian Southern Territory supports the recommendations outlined by the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) in its submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee on the Family Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, encompassing proposed new requirement for new DSP applicants, non-indexation of Family Tax Benefit (FTB) A and B Supplements, and non-indexation of FTB income test thresholds.

In particular, we support ACOSS's opposition to Schedule 3 which would delay access to the DSP while new applicants participate in a 'program of support'. In addition, we support the ACOSS contention that the proposed policy change would benefit a minority of applicants but would be financially detrimental to the majority. With the alternative payment at \$237 per week for a single adult, the Newstart Allowance is inadequate to cover basic living expenses. Given that most people with disabilities face additional costs (for example, transport and medications), and will incur additional costs while participating in a 'program of support' (for example travel costs), it is likely that many applicants would struggle financially until such time as they either secure employment or are deemed eligible for DSP. As noted in the ACOSS submission, there are also gaps and ambiguities in the Schedule that raise serious concerns about equity, security and the potential for increasing disadvantage for this group.

The Salvation Army broadly supports policies and practices that improve the employment prospects of all people, and has a substantial reputation of providing such services to the most disadvantaged and marginalised people. We cannot, however, support policies that erode self determination, empowerment and personal dignity, and minimise opportunities for a consumer voice in policy deliberation.

Page 1 of 2

Postal Address: PO Box 479, Blackburn, Vic. 3130
Australia
95 – 99 Railway Road, Blackburn, Vic. 3130 Australia
Telephone: (03) 8878 4500 Fax: (03) 8878 4805

In summary, The Salvation Army does not support measures that unreasonably delay access to a more adequate level of income support, nor do we support a process that does not allow for reasonable dialogue with key stakeholders and the community. For these reasons, we support the ACOSS opposition to the Bill and their call for the Government to implement a more equitable and informed policy direction for improving the employment prospects of people with disabilities.

Lynette Green (Lieut. Colonel)
Territorial Social Program Secretary
The Salvation Army Australian Southern Territory

Tuesday 14 June 2011