

Australian Council of Social Service

3 March 2022

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

Re: Social Services Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022

The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) is a national advocate for action to reduce poverty and inequality and the peak body for the community services sector in Australia. Our vision is for a fair, inclusive and sustainable Australia where all individuals and communities can participate in and benefit from social and economic life.

ACOSS supports the passing of this bill because it will provide greater incentive for people receiving the age pension, disability support pension and veterans' entitlement recipients to engage in paid employment. It is a progressive measure to allow pensioners who obtain employment to retain pension eligibility and pensioner concession card entitlements for two years.

However we believe similar measures could be applied to other recipients of government payments. So in addition to supporting this bill, ACOSS recommends the government take further steps to ensure the Social Security system is fair and accessible, and that it bestows equitable entitlements to benefits and concessions for all people on low incomes.

In ACOSS' view the best way to create greater equity in the social security system is to:

Establish a Social Security Commission to provide ongoing advice to the Federal Parliament on the adequacy of income support payments and other settings.

This is because setting of social security policy has largely been driven by political processes rather than an evidence base. To ensure payment rates and settings reflect the evidence, ACOSS calls for an independent body to advise the parliament



on payment adequacy and other settings. This would enable a fairer approach to social security design, with rates set by reference to household need. It would also guard against payments falling behind community living standards over time.

Yours sincerely,

Jacqueline Phillips
Deputy CEO/Director of Policy (job-share)
Australian Council of Social Service