



3 November 2023

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
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Dear Committee Members,

Anglicare Australia thanks the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee Bill 2023*.

For years, Anglicare Australia has called for working age payments to be raised above the poverty line. To that end, we support the role of the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee (EIAC) in providing advice on payment rates, inclusion, and poverty. We recommend three changes to the bill to ensure the EIAC is as effective in this role as it can be.

First, Anglicare Australia recommends that the bill be amended to require the inclusion of representatives with lived experience. These members must be on the EIAC primarily to represent a lived experience perspective, and should be able to demonstrate connections to groups advocating on these issues.

While appointments like these are more common in the health sector, economic and social policy advisory bodies have tended to exclude these perspectives altogether or co-opt the past experiences of representatives who have been substantially appointed for other reasons (for example, sector representatives or academics with past experience, but who lack current connections to lived experience groups). The absence of a meaningful lived experience perspective undermines both the EIAC and the quality of the advice being given to Government.

Second, Anglicare Australia recommends that the bill be amended to ensure that the EIA's reports are released publicly and responded to in a timely manner. EIAC reports should be released publicly at least two weeks prior to the Federal Budget. It is also critical that Ministers provide a written response to all EIAC recommendations ahead of the following Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook. As an advisory body, the EIAC can only be effective if its advice is transparent and if Governments commit to providing a response.

Finally, Anglicare Australia recommends that the bill be amended to require the EIAC to base its advice on the material needs of Australians, and the actions required from Government to alleviate poverty. Anglicare Australia is concerned that the committee's overly broad functions in the bill have opened the door to arbitrary advice based on political calculations, rather than advice based on material measures of poverty such as the Henderson Poverty Line.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the bill. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss anything raised in this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact us at anglicare@anglicare.asn.au.

Yours sincerely

Kas~~y~~ Chambers
Executive Director

