



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Parliament right to ditch cuts to benefits for poor and disadvantaged communities

**Media release
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Plans to place the burden of budget repair on those who can least afford it were wrong morally and economically.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has welcomed the Federal Parliament's decision to change their plans to cut the energy supplement to welfare recipients.

President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Archbishop Denis Hart said the Catholic Bishops are concerned about growing income inequality in Australia and its impacts on poor and disadvantaged communities.

"Cutting payments to the most vulnerable families and individuals in our community when their payments are already inadequate to meet their living costs, was a very concerning initiative," Archbishop Hart said.

"Budget repair should be achieved without unfairly placing the burden on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society.

"Putting further financial strain on people already suffering from income stress will only cause harm to them, their children and the communities they are in.

"Australia is in danger of allowing the economy to become a kind of false god to which even human beings have to be sacrificed.

"While we welcome today's decision to work collaboratively with the other parties to drop the planned cuts, the Catholic Bishops of Australia will continue to work to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor," Archbishop Hart said.

The rate of poverty in Australia is growing with an estimated 2.5M people or 13.9% of all people currently living below the internationally accepted poverty line.

Disturbingly 600,000 children now live below the poverty line.

"Unless the voices of vulnerable people are heard, we will not have a truly human society in which economic management serves human beings rather than the other way round."

"That is why we are speaking out against cutting welfare payments in order to repair the Budget - not in order to push an ideological line, but to give a voice to the voiceless and make sure their circumstances are understood and considered," Archbishop Hart said.

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