

Church body steps up push for fairer deal for low paid workers

The Catholic Church's employment relations body, has stepped up its push for a fair federal minimum wage in a new submission to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission's Safety Net Review.

The Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations (ACCER) submission follows on from a submission last year, in which it argued that the Commission should conduct an inquiry into the needs of the low paid and review the Federal Minimum Wage.

The 2003 submission also argued that the Commission should establish a benchmark against which the Federal Minimum Wage should be set.

However, in its 2003 decision, while acknowledging the relevance of the questions posed by ACCER, the Commission rejected the ACCER's proposal that an inquiry be conducted into the needs of the low paid. claims made by ACCER and the Australian Council of Social Service for an inquiry into wage-fixing issues, but said it was prepared to consider further material.

ACCER's current submission argues that the material now placed before the Commission by the ACTU provides it with empirical evidence to address the matters raised in 2003, and in particular, the needs of the low paid.

"The central issue for the Commission is whether the Federal Minimum Wage is a fair minimum standard in the context of living standards generally prevailing in the Australian community," the submission says.

"Is it a living wage?"

ACCER's submission argues that the Federal Minimum Wage must provide a standard of living to enable a worker and his or her family to live with dignity.

It supports an increase in the Federal Minimum Wage of \$26.60 per week and argues that in any adjustment of other award rates of pay, the primary beneficiaries should be those at the lower paid levels of the award system.

"The claimed increase of \$26.60 is a modest first step in the transition to a fair minimum wage as required by the Act," the submission said.