

Catholic body calls for Minimum Wage increase of \$26.60 per week

The Minimum Wage should be increased by \$26.60 per week, the Catholic Church's employment relations body has told the Safety Net Wage Review hearing yesterday.

Frank Costigan QC, appearing for the Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations (ACCER), said the evidence demonstrated that the needs of the low paid warranted at least this level of increase.

ACCER's submission referred to the circumstances of people in paid work who are forced to seek help from welfare agencies. In these cases, workers with families on low wages lack the ability to send their children on school camps, to adequately educate, clothe, feed and house their children.

"A worker needs to live with dignity. A worker needs to be able to provide for the family, or to look forward to doing so when the family arrives. A worker must not be placed in a position where it is said "I can't afford to get married or have a relationship", or "I can't afford to buy or rent a house", " Mr Costigan told the hearing.

Mr. Costigan also submitted that the needs of the low paid must be addressed by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission: "It is not enough to say that they would be better addressed through the tax transfer system , as is suggested by the Commonwealth."

"The reform of the tax transfer system is entirely a matter for the Commonwealth. If the Commonwealth believes there is a demonstrable link between the tax system and the needs of the low paid, then it should reduce the level of taxation for the low paid ", Mr Costigan told the hearing.

Mr. Costigan called on the Federal Government to fund and develop further research so that the needs and circumstances of the low paid can be fully identified and properly targeted actions implemented.