

MEDIA RELEASE - Amended

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For immediate release

Social Workers call on PM to rethink Discriminatory Treatment of Clients

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) requests Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, to defer action to force 100,000 sole parents on parenting payments on to the 'dole' until the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights and Senate Committees on Income Security have concluded their inquiries.

The AASW represents over 7,000 professional social workers and is committed to maximising the well being of individuals, families and diverse social communities, which emphasise principles of social development, social justice and social inclusion to enhance human dignity. The AASW is committed to creating a more just society and expresses concerns at proposals to move sole parents to the level of the allowances that are currently the subject of a Senate Inquiry.

The AASW has lodged a submission to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations into the adequacy of the allowance payment system for jobseekers and others, the appropriateness of the allowance payment system as a support into work, and the impact of the changing nature of the labour market (copy attached).

Professional social workers are in daily contact with clients and their families who are adversely affected by low income, low self-esteem and discrimination. These effects are amplified as a result of adjustments that flow from the application of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to allowances, to other forms of income security and to Average Weekly Earnings (AWE). It is publically stated that allowances are adjusted for changes in the "cost-of-living", but the lived reality is one of falling behind even the low level of income that is provided to pensioners.

AASW President, Professor Karen Healy says "Social Workers strongly endorse the request to the Prime Minister for a stay of discriminatory income security policies that will cost single parents as much as \$223 a fortnight. It supports the Senate report that suggests that the decision should be delayed indefinitely."

The AASW supports the Senate Committee's view that there is no convincing evidence that forcing disadvantaged job seekers below the poverty line is fair and will promote workforce participation. The AASW supports moves to increase work force participation proposed by some Senators but asserts that people affected require the support of sustainable support services, skilled staff and available employment opportunities rather than discriminatory and punitive measures that create pools of social disadvantage that do not contribute to the social development of the nation. **Australian Association of Social Workers** Phone: 02 6232 3900 Visit: www.aasw.asn.au

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