

Tuesday 6 September, 2016

## Poor Australians being criminalised by social security system

An alliance of six key organisations have come together to ask the Federal Government to address the growing employment crisis in Australia and stop the criminalisation of the unemployed.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has co-signed an open letter with the Australian Unemployed Workers' Union, the Australian Council of Social Services, the Anti-Poverty Network (South Australia), the Centre of Full Employment and Equity, the Fair Go for Pensioners Coalition and Guardian columnist Van Badham.

The signatories want action from Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to implement economic and social policies that do not punish Australian people who are unemployed or are social welfare recipients.

### The alliance is calling for:

- Abolish Work for the Dole and Community Development Program (CDP)
- Raise Newstart (currently \$392 below the Henderson poverty line per fortnight) and Youth Allowance.
- Implement a federal job guarantee program
- Provide adequate income security for older people
- Reverse changes to the single parent pension
- Abolish mandatory income management
- Make necessary and positive changes to the punitive employment services industry
- Loosen eligibility requirements for Disability Support Pension (DSP)

### The following quotes are attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

"Australia is becoming a country with an underclass of unemployed people who are unable to find work, with 18 job seekers for every job vacancy. We are also seeing crisis levels of youth unemployment, with more than 30% of young people in some Australian towns unable to find a job."

"Rather than penalising and punishing people who can't find a job or are unable to work, the Turnbull Government should make positive policy changes that help these people get back on their feet or stay afloat."

### The following quotes are attributable to Australian Unemployed Workers' Union Secretary Owen Bennett:

"For years, both sides of politics have failed to address Australia's employment crisis or the increasingly punitive social security system. As a result, we now have three million Australians out of work and a social security system that forces millions of Australians to live in extreme poverty."

"This is a national emergency, nothing less. As a country, we can no longer afford a Government that continues to ignore this crisis."

ENDS

Media contact: Owen Bennett 0481 186 479

<http://www.actu.org.au/actu-media/media-releases>