

## ADDITIONAL PAPER

The Australian Council of Social Service is the peak body of the community services and welfare sector and the national voice for the needs of people affected by poverty and inequality. We represent thousands of community based non-government organisations and charities around the country.

Our members are playing a crucial role on the ground in affected communities of the recent flood disasters on the eastern seaboard, helping people to rebuild their lives and their communities.

### What ACOSS wants:

#### 1. PARLIAMENT TO PASS FLOOD LEVY

Federal Parliament to pass flood levy to ensure **prompt reconstruction** of affected communities.

#### 2. QUARANTINE FUNDING TO ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY SERVICES AND NO CUTS TO INCOME SUPPORT PAYMENTS

The Federal Government must give a clear **commitment** that essential payments, including the Disability Support Pension, and services for people on low incomes will not be compromised. People who are socially vulnerable or struggling financially should not have to pay to restore the Budget to surplus.

#### 3. RESTORE CUTS TO NATIONAL RENTAL AFFORDABILITY SCHEME

The Federal Government must **reverse its decision** to cut back on the National Rental Affordability Scheme.

#### 4. TACKLE POORLY TARGETED SPENDING AND TAX BREAKS

Instead of cutting important programs the Government should focus on **poorly targeted spending** and **tax breaks** that mainly benefit high income earners and distort the tax system as recommended by the Henry Tax Review. These include tax breaks for **'golden handshakes'** (worth around \$1B) and removal of **tax shelters** on private discretionary trusts (worth around \$1.5B).

#### 5. WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

ACOSS has consistently argued for Government action to **reform the income support system** and **improve workforce participation**. These include:

- Reducing the gap between Newstart Allowance and pensions (currently \$130 pw) by raising **Newstart Allowance** (currently \$235 per week) by **\$50pw** (as proposed by Henry Review).
- More intensive help for **long term unemployed** people - including a **six months paid work experience scheme** in a regular job.
- **Boosting Job Services Australia funding** – currently an interview every 2 months plus \$500 for training – this is inadequate. Currently people unemployed for less than one year actually attract a higher level of funding so the system of subsidies to providers is 'upside down'.
- Ease the **Newstart Allowance income test** for sole parents and people with disabilities - so that payments reduce by 50 cents per dollar earned not 60 cents – making part-time work worthwhile.

#### 6. INCLUDE COMMUNITY SECTOR IN DECISION MAKING

Given the vital role our sector plays assisting people in greatest need, including our current efforts to help the flood ravaged communities in Queensland, the community sector must be part of the decision making process.