

Australian Council of Social Service

29 November 2022

Employment TaskForce
Department of Treasury
Parkes Place
Parkes ACT

Dear Victoria,

ACOSS welcomes the opportunity to inform the work of the Taskforce towards restoring and sustaining full employment in Australia. For the first time in fifty years, we have the opportunity to lock in its benefits including reduced poverty financial hardship and income inequality, restoration of real growth in wages, improved job security and quality, and pay equity for women.

As in the post-war full employment era, sustained full employment requires major changes in policy settings including an explicit full employment target alongside inflation targets in monetary policy, a more active role for government in macroeconomic management in booms and recessions, and public investment to support employment participation and reduce long-term unemployment.

Full employment of itself does not guarantee an end to poverty and secular growth in income and wealth inequality. That requires complementary policy changes including a substantial increase in the lowest income support payments, workplace relations reforms, a fairer and more efficient tax system, investment in skills and labour market assistance, and adequate public investment in the care and community services on which we all rely.

Full employment has a different meaning and character in today's economy and society. It is about adequate, regular paid working hours as much as access to jobs, and about jobs for women as much as jobs for men. The main driver of employment growth is now the care economy rather than the production of goods. The transition to a clean energy economy and adaptation to the effects of climate change will shape the labour market of the future.

As you know, ACOSS has already undertaken substantial policy work on full employment and related issues in preparation for the Jobs and Skills Summit in September, including our policy document for the Summit itself, and our agreements with the Australian Council of Trade Unions and Business Council of Australia.

Our submission for the White Paper consists of this letter, together with the following documents:

- Our policy paper on Full Employment for the Jobs and Skills Summit at https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/ACOSS_Restoring-full-employment_Policies-for-the-Jobs-and-Skills-Summit_2022.pdf ;
- Our submission to the Review of the Reserve Bank of Australia at <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/ACOSS-RBA-Review-2022.pdf> ;
- Joint statements with the Business Council of Australia and Australian Council of Trade Unions, and separately with the ACTU, on Jobs and Skills: <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/ACOSS-ACTU-BCA-statement-on-full-employment.pdf> and <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ACTU-ACOSS-agreement.pdf> ;
- Our *Budget Priorities submission* (with recommendations dealing with employment, income support, housing, climate change and energy efficiency, community resilience to climate change, and community services) at <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ACOSS-BPS-2022-23-FINAL-220228.pdf> ;
- Slides presented to the current House of Representatives Inquiry into Workforce Australia dealing with policies and programs to reduce long-term unemployment:
Attached
- Proposals to strengthen local employment partnerships <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/200812-Local-employment-and-skills-development-partnerships-FINAL-2.pdf> ;
- Research reports regarding people receiving unemployment payments and their experiences of income support and employment services at <https://www.acoss.org.au/faces-of-unemployment/> and <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/VoU2021.pdf> ;
- ACOSS proposals for adequate income support payments for people of working age: <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Social-security-next-steps-JUL-UPDATED-2-9-copy.pdf>
- Research on the economic and social impact of adequate unemployment payments <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Final-ACOSS-Coronavirus-Supplement-to-ACOSS-09.09.2020.pdf> ,

<https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/If-It-Wasnt-For-The-Supplement-I-Dont-Know-Where-Id-Be-August-2020-JobSeeker-Survey.pdf> and <https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/income-support-since-2000/> ;

- Research reports on poverty and inequality in Australia <https://bit.ly/PovertySnapshot> , <https://bit.ly/PovertyinAusPt2> and <https://bit.ly/3LWJtJn> ;
- Our latest submission to the Fair Work Commission on minimum wages <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/acoss-minwage-submission2022.pdf> ;
- Submissions on climate adaptation policies and our proposed national low-income energy productivity program, '*Healthy and affordable homes*' <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ACOSS-submission-NCRAS-13092021.pdf> and <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Brief-Proposal-and-implemantaion-plan-for-National-Low-income-Energy-Productivity-Program-September-2021.pdf>

We would welcome further discussions with the Task Force on these issues as your work progresses. Please contact Dr Peter Davidson at peter@acoss.org.au should you have any queries about this submission or need more information from us. I wish you well in your efforts.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Cassandra Goldie', is written over a horizontal dotted line.

Dr Cassandra Goldie
CEO
Australian Council of Social Service