

CATHOLICS IN COALITION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

MEDIA RELEASE March 17 2013

Federal Government Cuts to Welfare for Single Parents

At a meeting yesterday of its members Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace expressed opposition to the Federal Government's new welfare policy which will force around 100,000 single parents, 90 per cent of whom are women, on to Newstart unemployment payments when their youngest child turns eight. This will slash their weekly income by up to \$223 a fortnight, or 12.8 per cent.

Guest speaker Samantha Seymour, CEO from the Single Parent Action Group, said, "Unlike Minister Jenny Macklin, single parents cannot survive on \$35 a week!"

Around half single parents already work in low paid casual and part-time jobs. Unemployed single mothers whose only income comes from parenting payments live below the poverty line. As ACOSS states, "The reasons that the other half do not have paid jobs now include low skills, poor local job prospects, caring for a disabled child, and illness or disability."

Recipients tend to live in areas where unemployment is high, like Sydney's western suburbs where employment rates reach 10 per cent. Work available is often in the evening and on weekends, and with lack of access to quality and free childcare outside school hours or adequate public transport, single mothers face a series of systemic obstacles to finding suitable employment.

These cuts will only entrench the cycle of poverty that many single parent families find themselves in. A recent Anglicare report showed that over 15 per cent of children in Australia live in families unable to buy food.

"Is saving \$728m over 4 years to help balance the budget worth the future lives of our children?" Ms Seymour said. "One in five children are now living in poverty and with these cuts it is likely to increase to one in four children."

Prime Minister Gillard could help single mothers out of poverty by increasing welfare payments, providing state-funded childcare centres, free public transport and better public housing.

End

For further comment contact:

Samantha Seymour 0402 055 752

Anne Lane, Convenor CCJP 0408 462 168