

26 April 2025

Mark Gaetani
National President
St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia
By email: nationalpresident@svdp.org.au

Dear Mr. Gaetani,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Coalition's views on the important issues facing your members. A response to your questions is attached.

Under Labor, Australia's economy is weak, inflation and interest rates have stayed too high for too long, housing is unaffordable, and our country is less safe.

Under Labor, Australians are paying on average 13% more for food, 18% more for rent, and over 30% more for power and gas and young Australians have seen their dream of home ownership slip away.

The Coalition will get Australia back on track by delivering:

1. **Strong economy with low inflation.** We will rein in wasteful spending and reduce tax, red-tape and union control over small businesses.
2. **Cheaper energy.** We will ensure a balanced mix, including more renewables, more gas, and (in seven locations) replace retired coal plants with zero-emissions nuclear energy.
3. **Affordable homes.** We will fund critical infrastructure required for housing, assist first home buyers, restrict foreign investors, and rebalance Labor's record migration intake.
4. **Safer communities.** We will get tough on violent crime by non-citizens, boost our defence and border security, and improve online safety for children.
5. **Quality healthcare.** We will fund more GPs to address current shortages and increase bulk billing and the number of Medicare-subsidised mental health sessions.

Thank you for communicating our response to your members. Further information about the Coalition's election policies can be found at www.liberal.org.au/our-plan.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andrew Hirst".

Andrew Hirst
Federal Director

The Coalition's Response to St Vincent de Paul Society

2025 Federal Election *Justice and Compassion* Campaign

Supporting a Safety Net for All Australians – including increases to working-age payments, better access to healthcare, and stronger employment services.

Under the Albanese Labor Government, Australians have experienced the biggest collapse in living standards in the developed world. Australians deserve to have confidence that they can always afford the essentials in life.

The Coalition believes that it is the government's role to manage the budget in a prudent and responsible way, to alleviate household cost pressures and restore our standard of living so Australians can get ahead in life. We believe that a strong economy is the key to helping Australians fulfil their aspirations and ensure they can cover the basics in the household budget.

That is why the Coalition's key focus is creating jobs and getting people back into work, because we know that getting a job is the best way to improve the living standards of people and their families.

There are few countries that provide the strong safety net available to Australians. JobSeeker payments are a non-contributory taxpayer funded payment that provides a safety net for people while they look for a job. It is not meant to be a salary or wage replacement. Every dollar spent is a dollar that someone earned, so it is incumbent upon us that spending on our social security safety net is sustainable into the future.

Social security payment rates, including JobSeeker, Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment and related working-aged welfare payments, are indexed on a regular basis, which helps to maintain their value over time. Increases to these payment rates are automatically linked to specific price changes, such as the Consumer Price Index and wages.

In April 2021, the Coalition increased the base rate of JobSeeker by \$50 per fortnight, and increased the income free areas to \$150 per fortnight to support job seekers as they secured employment and re-entered the workforce.

Australia has a comprehensive income support system. In addition to base rates of payment there are more than 20 supplementary payments available to income support recipients, depending on their circumstances and additional needs.

On top of direct payments, our social security system also includes employment services, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme concessions and health care cards.

We must make sure our welfare system is fair to the taxpayers who pay for it. It is funded by taxpayers and therefore needs to be managed responsibly. This responsibility extends to future generations who will have to meet the cost of the social security system in the decades to come.

An elected Dutton Coalition Government will ensure the welfare system is fit for purpose and provides a safety net for those Australians most in need.

A Dutton Coalition Government will invest \$9.4 billion into Medicare to fix Labor's primary healthcare crisis and restore bulk billing back up to Coalition levels and to invest in mental health. Under our plan to deliver quality healthcare we will:

- Guarantee the growing funding of Medicare.
- Support Australians to receive healthcare in a timely way wherever they live.
- Grow our GP workforce to address increasing shortages through new incentive payments, entitlements and training support.
- Restore critical Medicare funding to help more Australians suffering from mental health conditions.
- Support Australians to access mental health services.
- Invest in cancer treatments, such as specialist cancer nurses to support Australians with Ovarian Cancer – the deadliest cancer affecting women.
- Deliver new investments in best-practice women’s health issues, such as endometriosis, menopause and perimenopause.
- Support regional health worker attraction, recruitment and retention initiatives to ensure those living outside our metropolitan centres are not disadvantaged.
- Conduct a review of women-specific health items funded under Medicare and the PBS to ensure the best support is provided to Australian women.
- Deliver cheaper medicines by reducing the PBS general co-payment to \$25.

Housing Security Across the Country – through more affordable and secure housing, rental reform, and recognition of housing as a human right.

A Dutton Coalition Government will act immediately to fix the housing crisis, by boosting the supply of new homes across Australia.

We will deliver the \$5 billion Housing Infrastructure Programme to fund essential infrastructure like water, power and sewerage at housing development sites to unlock up to 500,000 new homes, with 30 per cent invested in regional communities.

Under our plan, a Dutton Coalition Government will fight inflation to take pressure off interest rates and rents, and boost housing supply.

Australia has a comprehensive income support system. There are multiple supplementary payments, including Rent Assistance. This payment is to help with the costs of renting in the private rental market or community housing.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance increased over the last three years with Coalition support.

Social security payment rates are indexed on a regular basis, which helps to maintain their value over time. Increases to these payment rates are automatically linked to specific price changes, such as the Consumer Price Index and wages.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance rates are updated on 20 March and 20 September each year in line with the Consumer Price Index.

The Coalition recognises the challenge of housing for the vulnerable.

That's why we established the Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator to provide low-cost finance to registered community housing providers to deliver more social and affordable dwellings.

A Coalition Government will continue to support the delivery of the National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness which is an agreement between the Australian, state and territory governments.

The Agreement provides around \$1.8 billion each year from the Commonwealth to the states and territories, including \$400 million for homelessness funding.

The funding gives states and territories flexibility to deliver services that best meet the needs of their communities and to respond to emerging challenges.

Meeting the Needs of First Nations Peoples – by progressing truth-telling, raising the age of criminal responsibility, and investing in community-led solutions.

Labor has failed to achieve meaningful results in addressing Indigenous disadvantage, with its sole focus being the failed Voice to Parliament referendum.

An elected Dutton Coalition Government will focus on practical action for Indigenous Australians, solutions to improve health outcomes for Indigenous women and children, boost law and order and provide more housing in Indigenous communities.

We will address the significant disadvantage and neglect within regional and remote Indigenous communities. This includes by:

- auditing all Commonwealth expenditure on Indigenous affairs to identify failed or wasteful spending that can be reprioritised towards frontline solutions to make a practical difference in the lives of Indigenous Australians.
- establishing a Royal Commission into Sexual Abuse in Indigenous Communities to shine a light on the horrors of these crimes and identify systemic reforms to end this scourge.
- ensuring services are focused on delivering better health outcomes for Indigenous Australians.
- supporting the Northern Territory Government's plan to improve community safety, especially in Alice Springs.

Rising to the Refugee Challenge – including access to basic supports and ending inhumane offshore detention.

The Coalition's long standing policy position is that settlement in Australia will never be an option for people who attempt to travel here illegally by boat.

Illegal maritime arrivals and non-citizens with no legal right to remain in Australia should be returned to their country of origin or resettled in a third country in a way that is consistent with Australia's non-refoulement obligations.

Individuals subject to regional processing arrangements have opportunities for resettlement through arrangements with the United States and New Zealand, or can seek other opportunities such as private sponsorship with Canada. They may also elect to voluntarily return home or go to another country in which they have a right of entry.

The Coalition supports the use of Temporary Protection Visas as a core pillar of the highly successful Operation Sovereign Borders Framework, which serves to ensure that people smugglers do not have a marketable product.

The Coalition believes needs-based support should be provided to individuals who engage Australia's protection obligations. The level of support, work and study rights will depend on the visa type and the specific circumstances of the individual.

People waiting to hear about their immigration status may be eligible for support through the Status Resolution Support Services payment. If the Department of Home Affairs assesses a person to be a

refugee, they may be eligible for income support payments, as well as other support such as Crisis Payment, Special Benefit and Rent Assistance.

The Coalition expects non-citizens who are found not to be owed protection and who do not have a legal right to stay in Australia to depart immediately.