



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Budget 2017: Fairness and compassion should be the cornerstone of our society

**Media release
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Fairness and compassion should be the cornerstone of our society. How we treat our poorest and most vulnerable is a measure of our commitment to a fair and just society.

Today, Archbishop Denis Hart, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference said, the Catholic Bishops welcome the government's commitment to fully fund the National Disability Insurance Scheme and its housing measures to help people secure more affordable housing.

The Bishops acknowledge the government's decision to remove earlier measures from the 2014-15 budget that may have affected families and the vulnerable in our society.

For those on the very margins of our society, especially those with no prospect of meaningful work, the budget offers no new hope.

'A lack of regard for the poor and marginalised alienates them from society rather than allowing them to participate fully within it,' Archbishop Hart said.

In relation to education, the Bishops acknowledge the overall increase in funding, including to Catholic schools. The Bishops however remain concerned about some of the changes to the funding model. These changes are generating uncertainty and confusion among parents who send their children to Catholic schools, and among school leaders.

The changes may over time impact adversely on the affordability and even the viability of many Catholic Schools, especially in some States. This uncertainty could be resolved by greater ongoing consultation with the National Catholic Education Commission.

With regards to health, any individual with advanced terminal disease should be considered particularly vulnerable and deserves access to affordable, high quality end of life care.

'While the Bishops support the \$8.3 million investment over three years in palliative care services in the home, much more needs to be done,' Archbishop Hart said.

The Bishops endorse the government's decision to allocate funds for the establishment of the National Redress Scheme for victims of child sexual abuse in institutions to which the Catholic Church has already committed. We call on all State and Territory governments to participate in this important initiative.

'Further diminishment of Australian foreign aid funding is a step away from our international responsibility to developing countries,' Archbishop Hart added.

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