

Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Submitted via:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/OnlineSubmission

5 March 2021

Dear Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Strengthening Income Support) Bill 2021*.

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) is the peak body for child and family services in Victoria. For over 100 years we have advocated for the rights of children and young people to be heard, to be safe, to access education and to remain connected to family, community and culture. We represent over 150 community service organisations, students and individuals throughout Victoria working across the continuum of child and family services, from prevention and early intervention to the provision of out-of-home care.

On 18 February 2021, the Centre and 31 of our members sent an open letter to the Prime Minister, calling on his government to deliver a permanent, adequate increase to social security payments to a level above the poverty line to ensure families have what they need to provide for their children (see Attachment 1).

Working-age social security payments do not meet the basic living needs of Australians, many of whom are unable to afford regular meals and the costs of education for their children. Every day, our members witness the devastating impacts of poverty on children and their families.

State governments commit significant funds to child and family services to assist families to care for and support the wellbeing and development of children to prevent harm and improve life circumstances. Research co-authored by the Centre (see Attachment 2) shows that child and family services are being drawn away from their core purpose by the need to respond to poverty-induced crisis and provide emergency relief. When social security policies trap families in a cycle of poverty and disadvantage, placing pressure on parent-child relationships, our sector's ability to achieve meaningful change with families is impeded.

This Bill, which proposes to increase working-age payments by \$50 per fortnight, falls far short of what is needed and is a shameful abandonment of Australians most in need. **We urge the Committee to recommend that the government revise their decision and permanently increase payments to a rate above the poverty line, without conditions.**

Sincerely,



Deb Tsorbaris, CEO

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