

MEDIA RELEASE: Welfare Recipients Speak Out: Minister Porter, Stop Talking About Us And Start Listening To Us

Low-Income People Share Experiences Of Poverty, Unemployment, And Government Policies At *Anti-Poverty Week* Conference

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS: Friday October 21st, 1pm-2pm, Clayton Wesley Uniting Church, corner Portrush Road and The Parade, Beulah Park

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Dr. Cassandra Goldie, CEO of Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)

FURTHER INFO: Pas Forgione, Spokesperson for Anti-Poverty Network SA, on 0411 587 663, or at antipovertynetwork.sa@gmail.com.

Struggling welfare recipients – job-seekers, Disability Pensioners, sole parents, students – will share their struggles, and challenge Social Services Minister Christian Porter to end the tired old game of blaming and judging those on low incomes for their plight, at Australia's largest, most diverse *Anti-Poverty Week* event.

The *Power To The Poor – Silent No More* conference, hosted by *Anti-Poverty Network SA*, is one of the few opportunities for those in the firing line – those experiencing the reality of not enough jobs to go around, and government payments that are inadequate and have fallen behind the rest of the community – to speak out.

“We have a clear message for Minister Porter: stop speaking about us and start listening to us”, *Anti-Poverty Network SA* Spokesperson Pas Forgione said.

“For too long, the political conversation around poverty and unemployment has taken place as if the opinions of the poor and the unemployed, their insights, are of no consequence. This must end.

We want respect and justice: for the Minister to acknowledge that the problem is an under-supply of jobs – only 1 for every 11 job-seekers, including the underemployed – not an unwillingness to work; and to recognise the need for allowances and pensions to be raised, as called for by businesses, welfare groups, and unions.

We reject the concept of 'welfare dependency', the insulting notion that welfare recipients have become too comfortable living below the poverty-line to want to work.

Rather than becoming overly-comfortable on welfare, we have a safety-net that fails to protect adults and children from poverty. With Newstart, at \$263 per week, and \$163 per week below the poverty-line – and having not been raised in real terms for over two decades – only someone utterly out of touch could think the payment was not due for a significant increase.

1 in 7 adults and 1 in 6 children live in poverty, according to the 2016 ACOSS Poverty Report”, Mr. Forgione said.

The conference, open to not only low-income people but community workers and members of the public, will include lively sessions – led by those directly affected – on unemployment, job agencies, the Disability Support Pension, homelessness, Work For The Dole, sole parents, older job-seekers, and climate change and poverty.