



Christians for an Ethical Society Canberra

A Working Group of the Social Justice Commission of the NSW Ecumenical Council & associate
member of the ACT Council of Churches
President - Reverend Professor James Haire

www.ces.org.au
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MEDIA RELEASE

Tackling unemployment More than just running a dating agency

"The public perception of unemployment in Australia does not reflect the true dynamics of the problem," declared Prof. Bob Gregory, Emeritus Professor of the Research School of Economics at the ANU and former Board member of the Reserve Bank speaking at a forum this evening of Christians for an Ethical Society.

He continued, that the government seems to believe that the unemployed have a hollow log of assets and capacity that they can be reasonably pressured to draw down before looking to receive a hand up: 'not one cent more' of government welfare until they contribute what is considered their share of effort.

As the number of Australians looking for work pushes 755,000, the Federal government believes it is appropriate to sharply reduce unemployment benefits.

These cuts bear most severely on Australia's young people between 18 and 29 who will receive support for just six months a year.

Those between 22 and 24 are moved from the Newstart payment to the much lower Youth Allowance.

Prof. Gregory questioned that there is evidence that depriving the unemployed of income will turn them into well paid workers.

These savage reductions are said to be necessary to "support the sustainability of the welfare system as the population ages" and are based on the assumption that the present benefits make it "too easy for capable and able people neither to work nor study."

"If there is no evidence that these savage measures will transform the unemployed into well paid workers, there is a lot of evidence that they will aggravate social exclusion and lack of social cohesion," said Kasy Chambers, Executive Director of Anglicare, Australia, speaking at the same forum. On a daily basis Ms Chambers sees the failures of government policies.

"It is wrongly assumed," she said, "that all that needs to be done is to link up the unemployed with job vacancies like some large dating agency. We are dealing with a problem that cannot be reduced to simple supply and demand."

On the contrary, she stressed that in the long term, place based solutions with intensive inputs work.

"We have to get this right," she said. "The consequences of being a child in a household that is jobless are long term and multifaceted (health, education, security, etc.) These are the ingredients for being poor and of being more likely to experience unemployment."

Time of forum: 7:30pm, Tuesday 30th September 2014

Venue: Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, cnr Kings Ave & Blackall St, Barton

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