

What is Poverty?

- Poverty is a relative concept used to describe the situation of people in a society who cannot participate in the activities that most people take for granted. While many Australians juggle payments of bills, people living in poverty have to make difficult choices, such as skipping a meal to pay for a child's textbooks.
- Poverty is not just caused by individual experiences but by major inequalities built into the structure of society. Some of the causes of this inequality and poverty in Australia are lack of access to work and income, education, housing, health and community services.
- Poverty is an issue of health and wellbeing, not simply an economic phenomenon. People living in poverty commonly suffer greater levels of physical and mental illness and suffer reduced access to healthcare.

Why is this an issue in 2007?

- During the current time of plenty we should be sharing our resources, addressing disadvantage and investing in the future by building up our communities.
- Many people working and trying to support a family on the minimum wage struggle to meet basic costs of living each week.
- Despite low official unemployment rates, there are also high numbers of people who are out of work or only have a few hours of work per week.
- People on low incomes rarely own homes and rent is often unaffordable in Australia's major cities. Housing impacts on a person's ability to find work, education and training – regions and cities with jobs often have high housing prices and rental rates.
- Poverty inhibits the wellbeing of the community at large. Studies have shown that unemployment is more concentrated in some suburbs and areas of Australia, with long-term detrimental impacts on community life.

Ask your candidates

- What is your party's plan to address the causes of poverty in Australia?
- How would you use your position as a Member of Parliament to address the issue of poverty in your electorate?

FAST FACTS

ACOSS estimates that **two million Australians live in poverty** today – one in ten of us (based on a poverty line of 50% of average disposable income, as used in UK & Europe).

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2002, **58% of Indigenous people are at risk of poverty**.

Recent research about the **poorest 20% of families** in Australia indicates most of these families **are jobless**. Four out of 5 of families earning the lowest 20% of income had social security payments as their main source of income (NARSEM, 2004).

48% of these poorest families are **single parent families**, and families with older children are also overrepresented (27%).

In 2007, UNICEF revealed that Australia had the 14th highest rate of child poverty among OECD nations.

ACOSS's *Australian Community Sector Survey 2007* found that **for every 16 people who received a service from a community service agency last year, one person had to be turned away**.

In Jesus Christ we discern that which is truly human. As we feed the hungry, welcome the stranger and care for the thirsty, the sick and the imprisoned, there is the mysterious possibility that we will discover the life of Christ among us (Matthew 25:31-46), and share the love of God.

Dignity in Humanity: Recognising Christ in Every Person, A Uniting Church in Australia statement on human rights, 2006



Hot Issues

Federal Election 2007



Poverty in Australia



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