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UnitingCare Australia calls for urgent action to end poverty in Australia

UnitingCare Australia is calling for urgent action to eradicate poverty in Australia and ensure all people can live a life of dignity and choice.

Speaking at the Senate Community Affairs References Committee [inquiry](#) into the extent and nature of poverty in Australia, National Director Claerwen Little highlighted the devastating impacts of poverty on individuals and families.

"Poverty is not just a flashpoint of the current cost of living crisis, but a structural problem that requires structural solutions. Increasing income support is the most immediate way we can promote the wellbeing of the most vulnerable in our community," said Ms Little.

"Poverty is the outcome of intentional policy decisions on issues such as taxation, social security, income support, housing, employment, education, and community service provision."

Mark Newton, CEO of Parramatta Mission and part of the UnitingCare network appeared before the committee with Claerwen Little.

"We serve around 300 people each day through our Meals Plus program at Parramatta Mission, and demand is increasing significantly. Over the last year our meals program saw an increased uptake of 144%. Referrals to other services within our network increased by 204%.

"We provide more than just a meal, but a safe place for our clients to experience social interaction and to receive other supports. We deliver a measure of stability amongst often chaotic and extremely difficult situations," Mr Newton said.

UnitingCare Australia is the national body for the Uniting Church's community services network, one of the largest providers of community services in Australia.

The UnitingCare network provides more than \$5 billion in support services to more than 1.4 million Australians every year. It employs 50,000 workers, with a further 30,000 volunteers, across 1,600 sites throughout Australia, making it one of the nation's largest employers.

"As one of the wealthiest countries in the world, it is unacceptable and unconscionable for people in our community to live in poverty," said Ms Little.

"The existence of poverty not only diminishes those individuals and families that experience it, but it diminishes us all. We call on the Federal Government to take the steps needed to end poverty in Australia.

"We commend the Committee for undertaking this Inquiry and hope that the recommendations will inform the many important reforms underway in the 47th Parliament.

"We sincerely hope that the voices heard through this process will echo through these Chambers as a timely reminder that we can and we must do better as a country to eradicate poverty and set us on a path of human rights and human dignity."

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