

## *A new system for better employment and social outcomes – response to interim report*

The Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) is Queensland's leading force for social change, working to eliminate poverty and disadvantage. With more than 600 members, QCOSS undertakes informed advocacy and supports a strong community service sector.

QCOSS's key activities focus on providing effective policy advice, working to strengthen responsive community services and having productive partnerships with government, private sector, the media and the sector. This work is done with a Queensland free of poverty and disadvantage front of mind.

QCOSS supports the submission by ACOSS and offers a brief summary of Queensland based perspectives and recommendations for consideration by the Reference Group. While we welcome transparency, consistency and ease of navigation around the system, it is important that the new system acknowledges the complexity of issues faced by people who experience poverty, particularly where there are multiple drivers of disadvantage.

Queenslanders living in regional and remote parts of the state, for example are likely to face higher costs of living associated with their disadvantage, less access to affordable housing and employment opportunities, and less access to support services than in other parts of the state.

Simplification should focus on ensuring people with similar circumstances receive the same level of payments based on the same eligibility criteria. These payments should reflect the actual cost of essential services and be adjusted with regard to the changing market, rather than CPI.

Simplification should not require labelling people with high or complex needs as incapable of work, nor should it create disincentives to contribute socially and economically to the communities in which people live.

### **Recommendations**

1. That a sufficient consultation period be provided for groups who represent current and potential welfare recipients to engage with their constituents and undertake modelling of social and economic impact of proposed reforms (no less than 3 months).
2. That the success of welfare reform be measured, not only by savings to government but by the level and duration of poverty experienced at individual, family and community level.
3. That Government be compelled to ensure their commitment to reducing poverty and disadvantage through increasing opportunities for employment for people on welfare is reflected in their own procurement policy and practice in all jurisdictions.
4. That consideration be given to including dedicated community linking officers (in addition to case management roles) to ensure people made more vulnerable by the system are well linked the range of local supports they will require.
5. That consideration needs to be given to safety net provisions at a system design stage, with increased provisions made available during the transition period.

