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LABOR CONCERNED BY SOCIAL SECURITY CHANGES

Labor is concerned about the Turnbull Government's proposed social security changes introduced into the Parliament today, including the proposed new targeted compliance framework and the drug testing trial.

Labor will refer the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Welfare Reform) Bill 2017* to a Senate Inquiry to ensure that it is properly scrutinised.

We are worried that vulnerable Australians may be pushed into poverty, homelessness and potentially crime as a result of some these changes.

The Government's proposal could see vulnerable jobseekers be made subject to significant financial penalties.

This could include a loss of 50 per cent of a fortnightly payment for their first non-compliance, 100 per cent of their fortnightly payment for a second non-compliance, and cancellation of their payment for a third non-compliance, with a four-week exclusion from re-applying.

We are concerned about possible unintended consequences of this measure.

The truth is the Turnbull Government is failing to create jobs and training opportunities for many Australians.

There is only one job available for every 10 applicants locked out of paid work or who want more paid work.

Of course, people that can work should work, but maligning jobseekers is not the way to get them into the workforce.

Jobs programs like Work for the Dole are failing under the Turnbull Government. They should focus on fixing those to support people looking for work.

Australians looking for work need to be properly supported to get a job, not demonised.

The Turnbull Government has a terrible record in this policy area, just look at the Centrelink robo-debt debacle.

That's why Labor wants to see this legislation carefully examined by a Senate Inquiry.

Drug Testing Trial:

Labor has serious concerns about the proposed drug testing trial of social security recipients.

Similar trials conducted in the United States show little evidence of achieving better outcomes for people with substance abuse issues.

The Government has not produced any evidence to show that drug testing people on social security in Australia will lead to better health outcomes.

Labor notes the concerns of a number of experts and community organisations, including: ACOSS, Harm Reduction Australia, Rural Doctors Association of Australia, The Penington Institute, the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation, Homelessness Australia and St Vincent de Paul Society.

Labor will consult with key stakeholders on this issue, including health professionals and organisations that are on the frontline of supporting drug addicted Australians.

Labor believes in a society that protects and invests in people.

We don't believe that the most vulnerable members of society should be demonised.

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