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LET'S NOT FORGET THE REAL BATTLERS

The Uniting Church today urged the Liberal Party not to forget the 3.6 million Australians living in poverty.

The economic growth of the last two decades has passed many Australians by and Australia now ranks fourth in the developed world in the United Nations Human Poverty Index.

Uniting Church President, Rev. Dr Dean Drayton, said the Church wanted a serious bi-partisan commitment to tackle poverty.

“The Labor party and State and Territory leaders have signed a communiqué committing to put poverty on the agenda of the Council of Australian Governments and to develop a plan of action but so far we have not seen a similar commitment from the Liberal Party.

“As both sides try to woo the traditional Aussie battler, we are concerned that the needs of the 3.6 million real battlers struggling to live on a household income of less than \$400 a week are being sidelined from political debates.

“The Uniting Church believes that all Australians are entitled to a decent life, secure from the fear of poverty. Everybody should have access to work, education, housing, food and recreation. It’s a disgrace that in one of the wealthiest countries in the world 860,000 children live in jobless households and 3.6 million Australians live below the poverty line.

“Poverty is everyone’s business and we ask the Liberal Party to commit to the development of a national plan to address it,” Rev. Drayton said.

UnitingCare Australia National Director, Lin Hatfield Dodds, said UnitingCare, the Church’s national community services network, works with over one million Australians every year and has seen the growing economic divide emerge in Australia.

“Today 10 per cent of Australian households own 45 per cent of our wealth while half of households own only 7 per cent of Australia’s wealth.

“Every year more and more Australians are suffering an unacceptable standard of living.

“Poverty is no longer just about those who don’t have a job. Many working Australians now find themselves struggling with poverty and it is time our leaders stood up and took a stand against it,” Ms Hatfield Dodds said.

“The causes of poverty are many and varied. Tackling poverty needs a whole of Government approach with the Federal Government taking a national leadership role.

“This election, we ask the Liberals to match their national economic growth plan with a national plan to address poverty, developed in partnership with all levels of government, local communities, business and research sectors. Australia’s real battlers deserve nothing less,” she said.

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