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MEDIA RELEASE

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THOUSANDS MISS OUT ON GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

The Australia Institute report released on 31st May identified the fact that more than 168,000 Australians were missing out on \$623 million of assistance from the Government each year because it is either too complicated to make a claim, or because they didn't know they were entitled to it.

At a time where many Australians are still doing it tough, it is a national disgrace that many who are entitled to Centrelink payments – Parenting Payments, Carer Allowance, Disability Support Pension and Bereavement Allowance are missing out, the Report stated.

“No wonder ever increasing numbers of our citizens are approaching local charities for assistance”, Laurie Maher of Coast Shelter stated.

While the media and the community are very concerned about the Government spending money to advertise the Tax Review, no one seems very interested in ensuring that the same Government is not spending similar amounts in advertising the entitlements of many of our citizens.

In 2004 the Government reported that 1.3 million Australians were missing out on Government support and some six years later, there has been no policy review to address the problem.

“It's all well and good for our political masters to express concern regarding homelessness and economic disadvantage, but it's a bit hypocritical if at the same time they take no action to ensure some of our most vulnerable people are aware of their entitlements”, Maher said.

“Financial support is of no benefit to anyone if they don't know it is there or if it's too complicated to access it”, he stated.

What is needed is an Entitlements Commission to assist those in need by simplifying applications and ensuring that Centrelink informs the community of its entitlements.

The Australia Institute report concluded that we regularly hear about the scourge of welfare fraud and the Government cracking down on cheats, but we seldom hear about what the same Government is doing to promote its services and to find those people who miss out on the assistance they are entitled to.

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