

# Social Policy and the Federal Election

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**Anne Turley, Chief Executive Officer, Melbourne Citymission writes:** As a major provider of services to young adults confronted with unemployment, homelessness and social exclusion, Melbourne Citymission would love to see what both major parties have to offer on the social policy front. While all the mudslinging in Canberra undoubtedly makes for entertaining conversation in the bars and restaurants of Kingston and Manuka, we ordinary folk are wondering what our leaders are going to do about Australia's unacceptably high youth unemployment rate, which hovers nationally at around 10%, but is as high as 30% in some suburbs of Melbourne. We'd also like to know what our leaders have to offer in terms of making education and vocational training more accessible for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. All we can see at the moment is spin. Take Andrew Robb's address to the National Press Club last week. The Minister talked about the poor image of trades and the need for Government to change perceptions. The reality is that if you're a young person in Melbourne's western suburbs and you want to do pre-apprenticeship training in the automotive industry, securing a place is akin to winning the lottery – only 30 training places will be available this year. That's despite a critical skills shortage in areas such as heavy vehicle mechanics. As we head towards a federal election, it's time for both major parties to put their social policy credentials on the line and show us what they're going to do to make education and training, housing, health and childcare more accessible for ordinary Australians.