

21 July 2020



Concerns remain over adequate social safety net

UnitingCare Australia warns that whilst the extension of critical support measures provides relief for some, the failure to provide a permanent and significant increase in income support will place many individuals and families at risk of entrenched poverty.

“The Government’s announcement today to cut the income of almost 2 million people by \$300 a fortnight in September will hurt communities and is not what businesses and the economy need to rebuild. We must ensure people can keep a roof over their head and food on the table. Reducing income support payments will only drag our economy further backwards, stifling job creation and deepening hardship”, said National Director, Ms Claerwen Little.

“We are relieved that the Government is extending some additional support to people on JobSeeker beyond September, but we remain deeply concerned about the adequacy of this support.

“The reintroduction of waiting periods and the punitive compliance regime will see many individuals and families being denied the support they need.

“There must be an adequate, permanent increase, which provides people with some certainty, and ensures they can meet their everyday needs and not lose their homes,” said Ms Little.

“Lifting allowances permanently and substantially would help economic recovery and have positive employment effects – stimulating consumer demand and jobs growth, and equipping people with the resources they need to maintain their wellbeing and remain work-ready.

“We are pleased to see the extension of JobKeeper, albeit tailored and targeted, until March 2021. It will provide much needed support for many community services organisations as we continue to battle the economic impact of the virus.

“We have an opportunity to transition from temporary crisis measures to enduring reforms that deliver a simpler and fairer income support system for all. We will continue to urge the Government to adopt an ongoing, adequate increase to social security payments to ensure all people have the resources to live with dignity and meet their basic needs.”

UnitingCare Australia is the national body for the Uniting Church’s community services network in Australia. The UnitingCare network is one of the largest networks of social services providers in Australia, supporting 1.4 million people every year across urban, rural and remote communities and powered by over 50,000 staff and 30,000 volunteers.

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