

TUESDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2021

‘New’ JobSeeker payment will plunge people into poverty

Anglicare Australia and UnitingCare Australia have come together to condemn the Government’s announcement on the JobSeeker payment, which has come after months of uncertainty.

“This announcement has cut the rate of JobSeeker by cutting the Coronavirus Supplement. Worse still, the Government is trying to reframe that cut as an increase. Australians won’t buy that spin,” said Anglicare Australia Executive Director Kasy Chambers.

“Every MP should be thinking about the message this announcement sends to their constituents who are out of work. Some people will need years to get back on track, and now they will be pushed into poverty indefinitely. Our research shows that many will be forced to skip meals, and others will not be able to pay the rent.

“People out of work have been strung along for months. They were lifted out of poverty in 2020 only to have their payments cut again and again with no certainty. Now their payments will be cut to almost half of the poverty line. That’s not good enough.

“After plunging people back into poverty after months of uncertainty, the political process has failed people out of work. We need an independent body to set and raise the rate of these payments.

“If the Government can’t manage these payments and look after people in need of help, then it’s time to hand the power over to someone who will.”

UnitingCare Australia National Director, Claerwen Little, said that today’s announcement is a devastating blow to individuals and families struggling to make ends meet.

“What is being presented as an increase is in fact a cut. It will mean those out of work will lose \$100 a fortnight and be pushed back into deep poverty when the Coronavirus Supplement ends in March.

“Unemployment payments need to be above the poverty line. Increasing the base rate by a mere \$3.60 a day is not enough to lift people out of poverty.

“The Government chose to lift people out of poverty when the pandemic hit and now they are choosing to push them back into poverty and hardship, while at the same time imposing more punitive and onerous mutual obligations.

“No one deserves to live in poverty. We need a permanent, adequate increase to JobSeeker that actually enables people to meet their needs and live with dignity.”

Stories of clients living on the JobSeeker payment are attached and available for use.

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