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## \$50 a week minimum wage increase needed in WA

The Western Australian Council of Social Service has made a submission to the State's Industrial Relations Commission, calling for a \$50 per week increase to the minimum wage in Western Australia.

Increasing the state minimum wage by \$50 per week would ensure that people on the lowest wage were able to meet rising cost of living expenses, as well as to build their financial resilience.

"Independent analysis of both State and Federal Budgets have highlighted that the future projections of the growth needed to deliver economic recovery are dependent on higher wages growth," said Chris Twomey, Research and Policy Development Leader, WACOSS.

"However wages growth has remained flat, despite increases in both jobs and productivity, leaving economists worried that the usual mechanisms driving wages growth are no longer working.

"With WA Treasury predicting wages growth will rise from the current 1.5% to 3.25% by 2021, and Federal Treasury predicting a rise from 2% to 3.75% by 2021 nationally, State and Federal minimum wages settings are now the only lever capable of delivering rises at the scale needed to drive the level of economic growth needed.

"Wages for those on lower incomes simply aren't keeping up with the cost of living, and as a result, a big section of our community have fallen behind, It is clear that for Western Australians experiencing significant financial hardship and cost of living pressures, a \$50 increase is essential to meet their basic needs and improve their living standards.

"Massive hikes to utility bills and other household fees are putting increasing pressure on people's back pockets. We are seeing skyrocketing rates of electricity disconnections, with WA going from having the lowest to the highest rate in just a year.

"More and more people are seeking food relief, with people reporting skipping meals regularly in order to cover bills or to make sure their children have enough to eat.

"The State Budget, handed down last week, provided no relief for people on the lowest incomes, with the government announcing an increase in household fees and charges by \$292 which only exacerbates inequality.

"Many talk about how we can recover the economy in Western Australia. Increasing the minimum wage is a practical measure that contributes to people's spending power and can help drive the economy," concluded Chris Twomey.

Ends.