

Inequality growing on every level

WACOSS is renewing calls for the Government to Raise the Rate, following the release of two recent reports that highlight the impact of a growing inequality between high and low income families.

A report released by the Bankwest Curtin Economic Centre (BCEC), *Falling Through the Net: The Digital Divide in Western Australia*¹, has highlighted the challenge that people on low incomes face, when accessing digital technologies. Families with children, older people, and people with special needs, are particularly disadvantaged by the increasing challenge to accommodate digital technologies in their household budget.

“Education and learning is becoming highly dependent on access to digital technologies. Not only, accessing websites that advertise jobs and employment, online tests, and many government services are all online, which is a terrific step forward, but a financial burden for people who may already be facing tough financial situation,” said Louise Giolitto, CEO, Western Australian Council of Social Service.

According to the report, one in ten of the poorest families commit an enormous 10 per cent of total household expenditure towards digital products and services.

The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) released a report with the University of New South Wales on Tuesday, on *Inequality in Australia 2018*². Data showed a gap between those on the highest incomes and those on the lowest is incredibly large, with households in the highest 20% of income having five times as much disposable income as someone in the lowest 20%, while the average wealth of a household in the highest 20%, is 100 times that of the lowest 20%.

Inequality grew between 1999 and 2007, as many people with investments experienced strong growth, while for the same period there were inconsistent social security policies, such as the freezing of Newstart Allowance and family payment rates, and a long-term growth in inequality of hourly wage rates, which affected those on the lowest incomes.

“People on the lowest incomes need to be supported and protected, not punished. Governments need to take action, and make people a priority, not by giving tax cuts to big businesses.

“In Homelessness Week 2018, inequality is a significant issue because inequality means is the inability to participate in life to the fullest. The growing divide is a reality that we must not accept, and addressing must not be put off,” said Louise Giolitto, CEO, WACOSS.

Ends.

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¹ <http://bcec.edu.au/assets/BCEC-Falling-Through-the-Net-The-Digital-Divide-in-WA.pdf>

² <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Inequality-in-Australia-2018.pdf>