

Media Release

Embargoed until 12.01am, 14 July 2020

West Australians want a permanent increase to JobSeeker

A landmark study has found that more than two million West Australians – nearly 75 percent of the population – support a permanent increase in the JobSeeker rate.

Commissioned by a coalition of frontline community service providers together with WACOSS, the research has thrown weight behind calls across the country to raise the rate for good.

Currently, the base rate of JobSeeker is \$282 per week, well below the OECD poverty line of \$457 per week for a single adult. The Coronavirus stimulus has effectively doubled the rate to \$550 per week, but the benefits of this much-needed boost are now in jeopardy.

The coalition – made up of Anglicare WA, Communicare, Foodbank WA, Ruah Community Services, Uniting WA and WACOSS – is calling on our federal representatives to heed the voice of the people and prevent a return to people living on just \$40 a day.

Uniting Chief Executive Officer Amanda Hunt said it's clear that the WA community has a sense of fairness and believe that poverty is unacceptable.

"It's heartening to see that the people of WA agree with what we've been saying to government for years – the basic rate of social income support is too low.

"With the stimulus payments, people were finally able to afford the things most of us take for granted, such as warm clothes, car repairs or prescription glasses.

"We really can't go back to people living under the poverty line," said Ms Hunt.

As we progress through a social and economic recovery from the pandemic, there are fears that a return to pre-COVID levels of income support will entrench a new generation of disadvantage.

Foodbank WA Chief Executive Officer Greg Hebble said that the impact of poverty can be catastrophic for families and for the community.

"It's not just the people experiencing poverty who are impacted - poverty impacts the entire community.

"Financial stress transfers to greater demands on our hospitals, our mental health and domestic violence services, and all the other supports which are so vital for a healthy community.

"We already have prolonged food insecurity with people eating just one meal or day or skipping meals so that their children can eat.

"It's time that we end the cycle of disadvantage and raise the rate for good," said Mr Hebble.

14 July is the National Day of Action calling on the Australian Government to Raise the Rate For Good.

Media contacts

Uniting WA
Ren Adams, Lead – Communications
0422 146 680 media@unitingwa.org.au

Foodbank WA
Greg Hebble, Chief Executive Officer
0419 401 088 greg.hebble@foodbankwa.org.au