



\$3.57 A DAY WON'T LIFT ANYONE OUT OF POVERTY

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A \$50 increase to the fortnightly Jobseeker payment and Youth Allowance will do nothing to lift Australians out of poverty and will perpetuate long-term disadvantage, Catholic Social Services Australia CEO Ursula Stephens says.

Dr Stephens said today's decision is "deeply disappointing" to the large network of Catholic social service agencies, calling the Government's announcement "mean-spirited and short-sighted".

"We know that the increased payments provided through the Coronavirus Supplement improved the living standards of many families in Australia," she said.

"CSSA joined the many advocates calling for a permanent and substantial increase in Jobseeker, which has not been increased in real terms for more than 20 years.

"An increase of \$3.57 a day represents a betrayal of trust to everyone who is trying to live with dignity on this payment."

Dr Stephens said Catholic social services worked through 2020 with both long-term unemployed people and those who were thrust into unemployment by COVID-19.

"The Coronavirus Supplement has been spent in local communities and supported local economies. We know the lived experience of these people and the need for wholesale reform to the social welfare system," she explained.

CSSA has called for an investment in employment and training programs, as well as a job guarantee that will allow all Australians to contribute to the post COVID-19 recovery. It also supports initiatives that will improve people's employability and capacity to work, including those with disability.

"The decision to contain the Jobseeker payment increase to just \$25 per week will do nothing to improve workplace participation and social inclusion. Instead, we anticipate an increase in demand for our services that are already stretched, especially in rural and regional communities," Dr Stephens said.

"While the Jobseeker announcement is – by the most generous interpretation – a small step in the right direction, it must only be the first. If not, we will be consigning generations of Australians to poverty and entrenched disadvantage."

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