



MEDIA RELEASE

**Embargoed until 12am, Monday 17
October 2016**

The WACOSS *Cost of Living* Report is being launched at 8am
Monday 17 October at Bankwest Place, 300 Murray St, Perth WA

New Research Highlights Poverty in WA

A new report shows that high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and the increasing casualisation of the workforce is placing increasing pressure on low-income households.

The *Cost of Living Report 2016*, released today by the WA Council of Social Service in conjunction with the start of Anti-Poverty Week, sees the lack of significant growth for low-income households as part of a trend in Western Australia towards high levels of inequality.

“On our modelling, a working family has around \$130 a week spare after basic living costs. While this is a slight improvement on last year’s numbers, they are still at significant risk should an unexpected life-event occur or one parent loses their job,” said Irina Cattalini, CEO of WACOSS today.

“For an unemployed single, they aren’t even able to cover the costs for what we would consider a reasonable standard of living, coming up over \$30 short each week.”

“Western Australia has the most unequal distribution of income across Australia – higher even than the nation as a whole. Women, in particular, face the brunt of this inequality with WA also having the widest gender pay gap in the country.”

New national data just released by ACOSS indicates that there are nearly 3 million Australians in poverty, with 731,000 of them being children. In WA there are 240,000 people living below the poverty line, with a further 150,000 at risk of financial hardship.

“As a nation we should be extremely concerned that rates of child poverty continue to worsen. With 17.4% of children growing up in poverty, the national rate is 2% worse than a decade ago. By failing to invest in providing life opportunities for these children we are short-changing our future.”

“WA is a state undergoing profound transition. Without adequate support for low-income households from government, however, that transition will simply serve to increase inequality and divide our community.”

“Growing levels of income and wealth inequality in WA, on the back of an insufficient rise in the minimum wage and the lack of any meaningful increase to Newstart holds us back as a community and economically.”

Anti-Poverty Week is running from the 16th to the 22nd of October.

Media Contact: Irina Cattalini, WACOSS CEO
Phone 0422 422 438 or 9420 7222