
Bigger boost needed to the low-paid's wages

The Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) is concerned that the decision today by the WA Industrial Relations Commission does not do enough to improve the pay of those on the lowest wages, and does little to address wage stagnation, increase consumer confidence, or boost our flat domestic economy.

The State Minimum Wage will increase by 2.75 per cent, increasing it to \$746.90 per week. This follows the Fair Work Commission's decision in May to increase the National Minimum Wage by 3 per cent.

WACOSS and UnionsWA advocated for an increase of \$43.61 per week, or 6 per cent, in their submissions to the Commission.

"Frontline services are seeing more and more people who need their assistance to get by who are in employment, but whose income is too low to make ends meet," said Chris Twomey, Research and Policy Development Leader, WACOSS.

"Unfortunately, the increases awarded to the minimum wage will simply not be enough to address the persistent hardship that low-paid wage earners can find themselves in.

"We have seen the impacts of insufficient incomes in the growing rates of people living in food insecurity, where they are regularly having to skip meals or can't put food on the table for every meal.

"At the same time, electricity disconnections in WA are at a 6-year high with more and more people unable to meet the costs of their utility bills. Synergy's disconnection rate alone increased by 118 per cent over the last two years.

"Access to affordable housing remains out of reach for so many low-paid Western Australians, pushing them into financial stress.

"From our own research into the cost of living, we know that low income households are spending significantly less than the WA average in areas like recreation, health and education, all of which impact on their quality of life and personal wellbeing.

"While lower than what is needed, both the National and State minimum wage increases demonstrate a recognition that living costs are growing. Despite this, the Federal Government has not committed to increasing the Newstart Allowance, which is less than half the minimum wage.

"Workers currently out of a job should be able to rely on a social security system that provides a safety net to assist them to get by. At just \$39 a day, Newstart is simply not adequate," said Mr Twomey.

Ends.

The WACOSS submission to the State Wage Case is available for download [here](#).