

Monday 23 March 2020
MEDIA STATEMENT

WACOSS welcomes COVID-19 measures to help the most vulnerable

WACOSS welcomes the Federal Government announcement yesterday of packages that support our most vulnerable communities in Western Australia.

The increase of the Jobseeker Allowance (formerly known as Newstart) and the Youth Allowance Job Seeker payment are incredibly welcome for people experiencing hardship.

This much needed support will make a huge difference to capacity of the newly unemployed, and those who have been struggling for years on income support, to cope with and bounce back from the challenges of social isolation and economic downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than 80,000 Western Australians receive the Jobseeker Payment, which has not been increased in real terms in more than 25 years, and at \$40 per day places people well below the poverty line. This increase will go a long way to alleviating the hardship for those in unemployment, but it is essential that it is made permanent to ensure the adequacy of our social safety net beyond the current crisis.

Youth Allowance Student, Austudy, Abstudy, and Apprenticeship Payments have not been included as part of the package, and we will be working with the Australian Council of Social Service to advocate to the Federal Government for these to be included immediately

The Federal Government also announced support for community services and the charitable sector, who play a vital role in helping people at risk in our communities.

WACOSS is relieved to see the Prime Minister recognising the critical role that frontline community services will play in supporting those most affected by this crisis.

The additional funding will make a welcome contribution to ensuring services can still be delivered to those most at risk, however it is unlikely to be sufficient to deal with the level of need likely to emerge from this crisis.

A comprehensive rescue package for essential community services recommended by the COSS Network and ASU can be [found here](#).

Community services employ more than 100,000 workers across WA, accounting for 7 per cent of the State's workforce.

WACOSS is working with the State Government to ensure additional support for the most vulnerable during this time, and the services that support them.

Ends.

These statements can be attributed to Louise Giolitto, Chief Executive Officer, WACOSS.

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