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MEDIA RELEASE

Before the Cuts Began, Income Support Was Finally Covering Living Costs

New figures from the Western Australian Council of Social Service have revealed the overwhelmingly positive impact that increased income support, had for people locked out of paid employment earlier this year.

The annual *Cost of Living* report, which analysed data from the 2019/20 financial year, marks the first time since WACOSS began its household modelling that the income of our model unemployed single household exceeded their basic living costs.

Louise Giolitto, Chief Executive Officer, said the figures show that the full Coronavirus Supplement had an enormous impact on people who were unemployed during the pandemic, and that with increased income support were able to meet the cost of basic essentials – to pay their bills, keep a roof over their head, and eat three meals a day.

“Given that we saw food costs skyrocket during the crisis, and rents increase sharply for the second year in a row, it is clear that people locked out of paid work would have been pushed even further into financial hardship if it were not for the boost provided by the Coronavirus Supplement,” Ms Giolitto said.

“It’s outrageous that it took a global pandemic for us to finally see the first real increase to payments for people living on income support in more than 25 years.

“Having already slashed the Coronavirus Supplement by more than half in September, the Federal Government has now cut support to just \$10 more a day than the old Newstart rate, which will take affect just after Christmas in early 2021.

“During this time people on temporary visas, who were prevented from working and unable to leave the country, were left to fend for themselves – often relying on emergency support from charities to get enough to eat.

“There can be no question now that it is possible for our government to ensure people have sufficient income to meet their basic needs.

“For a short time, we almost eradicated poverty in Australia.

“It has been done before and we must demand it be done again. When it is, we must ensure nobody is left behind,” Ms Giolitto concluded.

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