

Public statement

29 June 2020

Uniting WA calls for permanent increase to JobSeeker.

The increase in JobSeeker and other social security payments thanks to the Coronavirus Supplement has made a huge difference to people experiencing financial hardship and disadvantage in our community.

A national survey by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) has revealed the difference the increased social security payments have made to the lives of vulnerable people. The survey found that, compared to before, 83% of people were now able to eat regularly and 75% were able to pay their bills.

The dramatic fall in demand for Emergency Relief – funded at Uniting WA by the Department of Social Services and Lotterywest – is a strong indicator that JobSeeker is meeting the financial needs of people most in need.

Uniting had to turn away more than 400 people seeking Emergency Relief appointments every month prior to March 2020. Just 20 people were turned away in April and this reduced to 0 in May and June – meaning that everyone now seeking appointments are able to be seen.

This is no surprise, according to Uniting CEO Amanda Hunt.

“By increasing JobSeeker to a more reasonable rate, people are able to pay their bills,” Ms Hunt said.

“Emergency Relief is a great support but in most cases it’s just an extra step. If social security payments allow people to live above the poverty line, they won’t have to seek help to buy groceries, medication or pay their bills.”

Ms Hunt echoes the concern of many in the community services sector that reverting JobSeeker payments to pre-COVID rates would be devastating to people.

“Uniting fully supports the campaign to Raise The Rate and the need to permanently increase JobSeeker and other social security payments.

“We should never accept people having to live under the poverty line.”

Contact

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