

# Media Release

22 July, 2020

## Western Australians set to suffer as JobSeeker plunged below poverty line

Frontline community services in WA have warned that nearly 250,000 Western Australians will be plunged below the poverty line when the Coronavirus supplement is reduced in September.

Despite strong public support for a social safety net above the poverty line, this week's announcement by Prime Minister Scott Morrison will cut the JobSeeker payment to approximately \$400 a week – below the OCED poverty line figure of \$457 per week.

A coalition of frontline community service providers together with WACOSS, are calling on the Federal Government to permanently raise the JobSeeker rate above the poverty line.

Comprised of Anglicare WA, Communicare, Foodbank WA, Ruah Community Services, Uniting WA and WACOSS, the coalition have anticipated that following today's announcement, demand for community services will soar from September.

Anglicare WA CEO Mark Glasson said for the first time in decades, social income support is actual providing a safety net to recipients, rather than a poverty trap.

"Australia may be experiencing a second wave of COVID-19, but we are bracing for a tsunami of need if the Federal Government proceeds with reducing the Coronavirus supplement in September. If reduced further in December, the scale of need will devastate countless families trapping them in entrenched poverty," said Mr Glasson.

"We know the majority of Western Australians – 75 per cent – support a permanent increase in the JobSeeker rate."

A recent survey commissioned by the partnering agencies also found 9 in 10 Western Australians agree any form of poverty in Australia is unacceptable, with more than half strongly agreeing that Australia should look after those in need.

WACOSS CEO Louise Giolitto said by slashing the Coronavirus supplement by \$300 a fortnight, the Prime Minister has cut a lifeline to almost 243,000 Western Australians receiving the social income support.

"This is a cruel blow. It will force people who were finally able to afford healthy food and to pay their bills back into hardship where they're unable to provide meals for their families and struggle with mounting debt," said Ms Giolitto.

"We know from recent jobs data that there is just 1 job for every 13 people applying, we need to be supporting people who have lost work and income, not punishing them, which is what today's announcement has effectively done."

---

### Media contacts

Anglicare WA  
Emma-Jane Morcombe, Media & PR Lead  
0439 272 262  
emmajane.morcombe@anglicarewa.org.au

WACOSS  
Laurene Coller  
0419 316 557  
laurene@wacoss.org.au