



## CSSA CALLS FOR URGENT RETHINK ON JOBSEEKER CUTS

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Catholic Social Services Australia has urged the Government to heed the findings of experts and its own reports and reverse its decision to cut the JobSeeker allowance next month.

A number of key social service agencies, peak bodies and industry associations have recently published analysis of the likely outcomes if the Jobseeker allowance falls to \$51 per day from January 1 – as currently planned.

Almost two million Australians are expected to be affected by cuts to assistance provided through the coronavirus supplement. If the forecast cuts come into effect at the start of 2021, the total amount a single person can receive on JobSeeker will fall to \$715 a fortnight.

“The long-term decline in the adequacy of JobSeeker, and Newstart before that, is a major policy failure that needs to be addressed and informed by a process of regular and independent review,” CSSA chief executive officer Ursula Stephens said.

“The Government needs to prioritise a focus on the common good when setting such policies and payment levels for social safety nets.”

CSSA confirmed the findings of Anglicare Australia’s latest survey that the previous rate of JobSeeker left some people with as little as \$7 per day after paying rent. The survey of more than 600 people receiving Centrelink payments from July to November also found 72 per cent of respondents skipped meals each week and one in 10 were couch-surfing.

After JobSeeker’s coronavirus-induced temporary increase, the percentage of people living on \$7 a day halved from 41 per cent to 18 per cent.

“Anglicare’s findings, and those of others in the sector, are consistent with the experience of our members working to support the most vulnerable people in our community,” Dr Stephens said.

“With data showing that the cost of essentials like housing, utilities and food are increasing much more quickly than CPI, we believe that payments should be indexed against wages and price increases commensurate with community standards and the cost of living.”

CSSA today renewed its call for the Government to establish an independent expert panel to advise on reform to social security payment rates that were originally designed to keep people out of poverty.

“What COVID-19 has demonstrated is that Australians expect a welfare system that is fair, equitable and sufficient to meet basic needs,” Dr Stephens said.

**Media Contact: Gavin Abraham | 0408 825 788**

The national network of Catholic social services