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**\$50 a fortnight JobSeeker raise will not support dignified lives:
Jesuit Social Services**

The Federal Government’s confirmation of a \$50 per fortnight increase to the JobSeeker payment – once the current Coronavirus Supplement ends in March – is a decision that lacks empathy and will continue to condemn many Australians to poverty, says Jesuit Social Services.

“We are extremely disappointed that, although the COVID-19 pandemic has made it abundantly clear that the previous payment of \$40 a day is not enough to live on, the Federal Government has decided to increase the rate by a paltry \$3.57 a day,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“This will continue to keep JobSeeker recipients below the poverty line and mean that they will be forced to struggle to pay for essentials that every Australian needs, such as housing, food and medication. This does not allow people to lead a dignified life and does not give them the opportunities they need to flourish and reach their potential.”

“A participant of one of our programs told us that the Coronavirus Supplement, which is about to end, allowed her to purchase a proper winter jacket. The extra money she received each fortnight meant she no longer had to choose between paying for groceries or medication. It is heartbreaking that people like her, and so many other Australians, will again be forced to made decisions like this.”

Ms Edwards says it is particularly cruel that the Federal Government has failed to listen to advice from the social services sector, economists, business leaders and welfare recipients to raise the raise to a level that allows a dignified standard of living, at a time when the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are still being deeply felt.

“The pandemic has had a significant impact on people who have already been on the margins of society – people who are unemployed, people who are underemployed or in insecure work and people who lack safe and stable housing. COVID-19 is not over, not by a long way, and the decision to make the lives of people already doing it tough even harder during this time is concerning.”

“The Federal Government has an obligation to all Australians to create a fair social safety net that ensures recipients can afford an adequate standard of living, and today’s announcement falls a long way short of that.”

Jesuit Social Services has long supported ACOSS’s #RaiseTheRate campaign, which has advocated for the Coronavirus Supplement to be maintained until Australia’s social security system is fixed for good.

“Today’s decision shows a disregard for vulnerable people and will have devastating consequences. The polls suggest that most Australians, not just JobSeeker recipients, support a fair and just safety net for all. We will continue to advocate towards this goal.”

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