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A Heartbreaking Budget For People On JobSeeker, Low-Income Renters

The first Albanese Federal Budget is a heartbreaking budget for those with the least, offering no meaningful relief, while those with the most look forward to enormous tax cuts.

Despite the unprecedented cost-of-living pressures for people on JobSeeker, renters, and others on low incomes, the Federal Budget contains no desperately-needed raise to JobSeeker and other income support payments, and no additional funds to urgently increase public housing stock.

“JobSeeker is only \$48 a day. People on JobSeeker are facing unprecedented, unsustainable rises in rents, and other basic costs. We hear of \$30-\$50-a-week rent rises, compounded by double-digit percentage increases in utility and fresh food costs. These increases are blowing a low-income person’s budget to pieces”, Anti-Poverty Network SA spokesperson Duncan Bainbridge said.

“The recent \$1.83-a-day “rise” to JobSeeker, an automatic, twice-a-year indexation to ensure JobSeeker matches inflation, does not even come close to matching what is happening to people’s lives. Labor should recognise this, and implement an immediate raise to JobSeeker and other payments, lifting them above the poverty-line, something long supported by most of the community.

With massive numbers of low-income renters facing ‘housing crisis’ – spending more than 50% of their income on rent – the refusal to commit additional funds specifically to expanding public housing stock is staggering. Any housing announcement that does not massively increase the number of new public homes is tinkering around the edges. 1 million new homes is cold comfort indeed, when virtually all of those homes will be out of reach to those on very low incomes.

Labor’s current public housing commitment – an extra 20,000 homes, nationally, over 5 years – is a drop in the ocean, when, in 2021, there were 163,500 on the public housing waiting list, nationally, and 17,000 on the public housing waiting list, just here in SA.

That Labor is persisting with the Stage 3 Income Tax Cuts – that will cost over \$20 billion year, when implemented from July 2024, and will largely benefit very high-income earners – but cannot bring themselves to permanently raise JobSeeker above the poverty-line, or put vastly more funds into public housing, shows a staggering, callous failure to listen and respond to the huge level of hardship in the Australian community”, Anti-Poverty Network SA spokesperson Duncan Bainbridge said.

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