

ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK

SOUTH AUSTRALIA



JobSeeker – Factsheet And Key Messages

Key Messages:

- Everyone deserves an income where they can pay for housing, bills, medicine, food, studying, job-searching, and staying connected to their community.
- We have never seen more people on JobSeeker who are struggling to keep a roof over their head and put food on the table.
- JobSeeker is \$54 a day. This is roughly \$32 a day **below** the [Henderson poverty-line](#), and the lowest unemployment payment in the developed world.
- Everyone deserves an income where they can pay for housing, bills, medicine, food, studying, job-searching, and staying connected to their community.
- Last year, the Albanese Government’s Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee [recommended a “substantial raise” to JobSeeker](#). But the Government has still refused to act on this advice.
- Australia has proven we can afford to lift people out of poverty. During COVID, the Morrison Government showed how quickly this could be achieved when it temporarily doubled the rate of JobSeeker. [The impacts of this on people’s health were extraordinary](#).
- Budgets reflect where governments choose to spend money - when they say they cannot afford to raise Jobseeker rates to a livable level, this means they are choosing to spend that money on things they believe are more important than helping people out of poverty.
- [There is no evidence a JobSeeker raise would discourage job-searching](#).
- [Most of the skyrocketing inflation we have seen is coming from huge corporate profits](#), the housing market, and overseas economic and political impacts.

Key Statistics:

- Base rate of JobSeeker = \$381 a week, or \$54 a day.
- Full-time average weekly earnings (2023) = \$1,875 per week.
- Median worker earning (2023) = \$1,250 per week.
- Minimum wage (2022) = \$813 per week.
- The Henderson poverty-line (2023) = \$602 a week.

- According to [Anglicare's annual Rental Affordability Snapshot](#), less than 1 percent of rentals, nationwide, are affordable for a single person on JobSeeker
- A September 2023 [ACOSS cost of living survey](#) on JobSeeker and other Centrelink payments highlighted the extent to which people already living in deep poverty have been affected by skyrocketing living costs:
 - Of those who are privately renting, more than 70 percent reported experiencing at least one rent increase in the past year
 - And of those, nearly half (48 percent) are facing increases of more than \$40 a week, with 1 in 3 facing increases of more than \$50 a week.
 - More than 94 percent reported 'rental stress', that is spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent, with more than half reporting 'rental crisis', spending 50 per cent or more of their income.
 - Almost every respondent (99 percent) reported seeing an increase in their grocery bill over the past year.
 - More than 70 percent said they were eating less and rationing meals.
 - 64 percent of respondents said they were cutting back on healthier food, including meat, and fresh fruit and vegetables.
 - Respondents reported cutting back on cooling or heating (73 percent), use of lights (62 percent) or taking fewer hot showers (54 percent) to use less energy.
 - 64 percent of respondents said they went without food or medicine to afford their energy bills.
- [When JobSeeker was doubled in 2020, during COVID:](#)
 - The number of people skipping meals because of a lack of funds had dropped by over half, to 33%.
 - People's ability to purchase nutritious food dramatically increased, with 93% reporting that they could afford more fresh fruit and vegetables, and 86% reporting that they can afford more meat.
 - [But, even on the doubled rate of JobSeeker](#), during COVID (2020), 3 in 10 people reported that they were still skipping at least 1 meal a week, and 4 in 10 people reported that they were still struggling with medical expenses.
- [There is 1 entry-level role, for every 26 job-seekers](#), and 44 percent of job vacancies require tertiary-level qualifications.
- Over [4 in 10 job-seekers have a diagnosed disability](#).

On Raising JobSeeker, And Looking For Paid Work:

- Many people seeking paid work are older workers, people with disabilities, and parents with young children, they face additional barriers when competing for jobs.
- To make matters worse, instead of supporting people to find paid work, we are making their lives harder with harsh payment compliance ("Mutual Obligation") arrangements.

- Lifting JobSeeker will actually help people look for jobs because they can focus on interviews and applications rather than budgeting to make sure they can survive.
- [There is 1 entry-level role for every 26 job-seekers](#), and 44 percent of job vacancies require tertiary-level qualifications.
- Over 4 in 10 jobseekers have a diagnosed disability.

How To Pay For A Raise To JobSeeker (And Other Centrelink Payments):

- There are many ways of funding a significant raise to JobSeeker and other Centrelink payments include ending the many tax concessions that largely benefit the very well-off, such as:
 - [Ending the negative gearing and capital gains concessions](#) that benefit investors and landlords (worth \$157 billion over 10 years), and have helped inflate the housing market.
 - [Ending the billions of dollars of subsidies \(over \\$10 billion a year\) for the highly-destructive fossil fuels industry](#), and ensuring that fossil fuels companies are properly taxed, through a [Petroleum Rent Tax](#).
 - Properly taxing corporate Australia: [3 in 10 companies paid no income tax, in 2021-2022](#).

What Was Announced In Last Year's (2023) Federal Budget:

- A \$20 a week (\$2.58 a day) increase to JobSeeker, and student payments.
- The Mature Age rate of JobSeeker (roughly \$25 a week) being extended to the 55-59 age group (only for 60+ age group at April 2024).
- A 15% increase to Rent Assistance (\$11.50 a week, for the maximum rate, for single people).
- Sole parents having access to the higher Parenting Payment in place of JobSeeker, till their youngest child turns 14, instead of 8.
- A \$500 rebate for low-income households, for their energy bills.
- *Since then*, JobSeeker has been indexed – this is an automatic, tiny increase that happens, twice a year, to help JobSeeker “keep up” with living costs – the most recent indexation, in March 2024, saw JobSeeker rise by 97 cents a day.

What Anti-Poverty Network SA Is Calling For:

- A liveable, dignified income for all, by raising JobSeeker, Youth Allowance, and other Centrelink payments above the Henderson poverty-line, to at least \$88 a day.
- The relaxation of unfair eligibility requirements for the Disability Support Pension, so that more people with complex, chronic health issues, are able to qualify for the payment.
- The ending of all "Mutual Obligation" requirements, including compulsory Job Agency appointments and activities, and Work For The Dole Activities, activities that do nothing to help job-seekers find paid work.
- The scrapping of all non-voluntary versions of Income Management (Welfare Quarantining), including the Basics Card.