

ANTI-POVERTY WEEK 2026



FACTSHEET

5 FACTS, 5 STORIES, 5 ACTIONS

This factsheet was produced by Anti-Poverty Network SA, a grassroots community advocacy organisation led by people directly affected by the poverty crisis.

5 FACTS

More Than 1 in 7 Adults And 1 In 6 Children Live In Poverty

[According to UNSW](#), more than 1 in 7 adults live in poverty (over 3.7 million people), and more than 1 in 6 children (over 750,000 children) live in poverty.

JobSeeker Is Almost \$300 Week Below The Poverty-Line

JobSeeker pays \$409/week for a single person, which is almost \$300/week below the [Henderson Poverty-Line](#) (\$703/week for a single person). It is one of the lowest unemployment payments in the wealthy world. In fact, all our welfare payments are below the Henderson Poverty-Line.

People On Welfare Payments Cannot Meet Their Needs

According to [the latest Raise The Rate survey of 1500 people](#), people on JobSeeker and other payments are experiencing huge rates of hardship:

- 95% said they struggle with grocery prices
- 3 in 4 said they have trouble affording medicine or healthcare
- 79% said they cannot afford their energy bills

People On Welfare Payments Have Higher Mortality Rates

[New Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data](#) has revealed that people on income support have higher mortality rates:

- People on welfare payments have a mortality rate 9 times higher than people not on those payments
- People on welfare payments have a suicide rate 5 times than the rest of the country

No Affordable Rentals For People On The Lowest Incomes – Anywhere

[According to Anglicare's 2026 Rental Affordability Snapshot](#), less than 1% of rentals are affordable for people on welfare payments; of 49,000 rentals that were examined:

- Just 1 rental (0%) nationwide was affordable for someone on JobSeeker
- 0 rentals (0%) were affordable for someone on Youth Allowance
- Just 0.2% of rentals were affordable for someone on the Age Pension

ALBO 2021: “[NO ONE LEFT BEHIND](#)”

5 ADELAIDE STORIES

MEL – Public housing tenant, in their 40s

I want the community to know that living in poverty absolutely impacts your health. Having to space out doctor and specialist appointments so you can afford transport costs and prescriptions means you never get the proper care in a timely manner, which often means health outcomes are worse. Payments are so far below the poverty-line means I can't afford to eat and take care of my medical needs. I have to choose between the two. Nobody should have to make these choices.

If JobSeeker was a liveable income, I could get my health issues sorted, and actually have a chance at working. Poverty is holding me back while making my health worse. Everyone should be able to afford a home, food, and healthcare.

OLI – JobSeeker, renter, in their 20s

Living in poverty is exhausting. I can never properly relax because the next expense is always in the back of my mind. Poverty makes you question your personhood. You start to wonder, "have I done something to deserve this?" But the truth is that no one deserves to live in poverty. No one should have to choose between food, shelter, warmth, or medicine.

If I had a liveable income, I could pay my bills on time, every time. I could afford to throw away the clothes that I've sewn back together countless times. I could make a doctor's appointment when I'm sick without second-guessing if it's the right call. I could feel like a person again, instead of a machine running on fumes.

DANIEL – Disability Support Pension, renter, in their 40s

What I want the community to know about poverty is that it limits your choices. I'm on the Disability Support Pension because of Bipolar I Disorder, and I'm constantly forced to make choices like, do I pay for health insurance for myself or a vet membership for my cat, Ned Kitty. Each day, I'm making trades rather than being able to assign a portion of a reasonable income to each of my needs.

If I had a liveable income, I'd have money for entertainment. Currently, I'm only able to dedicate \$7.10 a week to my Wants, including entertainment. That's barely enough for a hot drink at a cafe. If I want to go out for dinner with friends, I need to save up. I'd love to be able to go to the movies regularly, as that's something I really enjoy, but it's a rare luxury.

TRACEY – JobSeeker, public housing tenant, in their 50s

Poverty isn't all gray and drab. I seem to be able to laugh and enjoy what I can. I wear bright, colourful clothes. I try to take pleasure in small, simple things. It is, however, a challenge. Constantly a challenge. There are some who think people on 'the dole' are living some kind of high life. Lazing their days away at the beach. Going out and getting pissed on the weekend.

POVERTY IS A POLITICAL CHOICE

TRACEY (continued)

Really? How far out of touch with the cost of living are some people? When I was working (in my very part-time job supplemented by JobSeeker) going to work was my social life pretty much. It was where I was able to interact and have connections with others. My work mates and customers.

If I want to have a social life I have to plan, and put some money aside. So many times I have to say no to going out with friends. I don't spend my days at the beach. They are spent stuck at home. I volunteer on an ad hoc basis with a few different organisations. Now the cost of petrol impedes on that. Something else I need to be careful with.

If the rate of JobSeeker were increased somewhat, I could offer to give more time to some of the organisations I volunteer with, as the cost of petrol wouldn't be such a concern. In turn this means I am spending more time with people and connecting. This would mean so much to one's mental health and general well being. I could catch up with friends over a coffee (or smoothie) at a cafe. I'd be able to take my pets to the vet as soon as there was a need. Instead of working out what bills I had that needed to be paid first. It's not just my pets' health either. As I age, my own health needs more attention.

SAMANTHA – JobSeeker, in their 50s

After working part-time and caring for my mum for 7 years, I had to stop working and care for her full-time for about 18-months. I was transferred from Carer Payment to JobSeeker after she died in August 2025. Centrelink originally told me this would happen on 30th January 2026, but unbeknownst to me, instead it occurred on the 4th December 2025. I would have been more careful with Christmas spending had I known, and I would have done the application for JobSeeker earlier.

When I did apply for JobSeeker, a payment months earlier from my former employer was incorrectly coded as a redundancy payment. Instead of receiving the full JobSeeker payment, I was left with just \$70 a week. I knew the amount was wrong, but it took Centrelink months to work out why and get the error fixed. I was incredibly fortunate that I had some small savings and could live rent-free in my mum's house during this period. But I kept thinking: what if I didn't? What if I was paying rent, had children to support, or had no savings to fall back on? \$70 a week isn't an income you can live on.

What shocked me most was that this could happen through a computer automated decision-making system, and that it took months to review and correct. I'm still waiting for them to review why the Carer's payment stopped in December instead of January. Even on the full payment, I get further and further behind weekly and as I can't get a job, I'm afraid I may end up homeless before long.

5 Actions Governments Can Take To Tackle Poverty

Lift People Out Of Poverty

- **Raise Welfare Payments To The Poverty-Line** *(Federal Government)*
 - This is an incredibly wealthy nation – no one should have to live on an income where it is a struggle to look after their health, keep a roof over their head, and be part of their community.
 - We lifted huge numbers of people out of poverty in 2020, when the COVID Supplement temporarily doubled JobSeeker/Youth Allowance – [the impacts were extraordinary](#). We can do it again – all it would take is political will.

Address The Housing Crisis

- **Fund A Massive Public Housing Boost** *(Federal Government and State Government)*
 - We need a massive investment in new public housing, to reverse decades of decline and sell-offs. We are calling for at least 1 in 10 new homes to be public housing, with a minimum target of [20,000 new public homes for SA](#).
 - There are many ways of funding for a substantial increase to public housing stock, including the Federal Government cracking down on the [1 in 4 Australian companies that pay no company tax](#), and implementing a [strong 25% tax on gas exports](#).
 - Of course, building more public housing takes time – so we are also calling for the State Government to establish a [vacant houses levy](#), to pressure investors to rent-out empty properties (with any revenue raised would be spent on more public housing).
- **Stabilise Rents For 2 Years, Then Introduce Rent-Caps** *(State Government)*
 - Rents continue to soar, growing faster than people's incomes. There are still no limits to how much landlords can increase the rent, every year.
 - It is time for the State Government to protect renters from greedy rent rises, with a temporary rent-pause, followed by rent rises being limited to inflation.

Other Cost-Of-Living Relief

- **Expand Medicare To Cover Dental** *(Federal Government)*
 - The cost of dental care can be painfully expensive for not only very low-income people but people on moderate-incomes – we are calling for dental care to be incorporated into Medicare, so that anyone with a Medicare card can access dental services without having to pay hundreds of dollars.
- **Make Public Transport Free** *(State Government)*
 - For those on the lowest incomes, cheaper public transport fares would help them to be mobile, meet their commitments, and participate in everyday life – this is one of the simplest things the SA Government could do for those struggling to put food on the table.

For further info about Anti-Poverty Network SA



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