

## Newstart a sick policy in need of healthy rethink

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*...there seemed to be no way out. I was sick and couldn't afford to get better.*

*I'm a victim of sexual assault resulting in a diagnosed anxiety disorder and depression. I couldn't afford the gap payment for counselling services.*

*A skin infection got totally out of control. I did not have the cash to buy the creams.*

*I am unable to afford the medication I need...I have had to stop seeing my psychologist...which has been very detrimental to my mental health.*

Newstart recipients are not only more likely to suffer ill health than other Australians but then struggle to get the treatment they need, the Consumers Health Forum said today.

The comments above are from Newstart recipients who responded to a survey for submission to the Senate Inquiry into the adequacy of the income support payment.

"The disturbing level of untreated sickness experienced by Newstart recipients is another reason why the allowance should be increased immediately by \$75 a week," the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

"For those who do not have the misfortune of having to depend on Newstart, it is probably not widely realised that so many recipients and their children are haunted by health problems the rest of us can have treated promptly.

"The CHF submission to the Senate inquiry says there is a particularly strong causal link between unemployment and mental health issues, as well as for heart disease where stress from unemployment causes increased risk.

"And the impact on children should be evidence alone of the need for an increase in the allowance. Family poverty is strongly associated with poorer outcomes for children's wellbeing and healthy development and results in more likely adult physical illhealth and mortality.

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"This is not only bad for people's health, it is bad for the economy. Research has found that if the health inequality gap was closed there would be 500,000 fewer Australians with chronic illness and \$2.3 billion saved in annual hospital costs" Ms Wells said.

See CHF submission at: <https://www.chf.org.au/publications/submission-senate-newstart-inquiry>

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