

JobSeeker rate a poor response

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The Consumers Health Forum says the proposed new JobSeeker rate of just \$25 a week extra fails to recognise the economic and health damages that low incomes inflict on people.

CHF argues the Government should set the JobSeeker rate at \$65 a day.

“Australians accepted the good sense of a substantial public investment in income support during the height of COVID-19 concern and the validity of those concerns remains as strong as ever,” the CEO of the CHF, Leanne Wells, said.

“As the CHF Consumer Commission report stated, if ongoing government support is not provided it is likely that COVID-19 will leave a legacy of greatly increased inequality and poverty.

“Health equity and social justice principles need to be at the forefront of all pandemic responses and recovery plans.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has increased inequality by significantly reducing earnings among the lower half of household income earners. Average weekly wages in the industries most affected by the pandemic and lockdowns were less than half of those in the least affected industries. Women, young people and people on income support are over-represented in this cohort.

“CHF supported the call by the Australian Council of Social Service urging the Government to set the Jobseeker rate at \$65 a day. This is particularly necessary at a time when there is only one job for every nine

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unemployed people and the position is even worse in many regional areas.

“As the Consumer Commission said: ‘There is a clear link between poverty and poor health and social outcomes and therefore policies that reduce poverty, ensure stable housing and meet basic needs are important for improving health and wellbeing and easing the demand on our health system, particularly emergency and hospital-based services’.”

“In our submission on the Federal Budget, we point out that Australia has the lowest rate of unemployment payments in the OECD and the evidence shows that the payments are not adequate to meet the costs of housing, food, basic healthcare, and transport.

“This means that people relying on these payments are living in poverty and increased risk of untreated ill-health. Is that what Australians really want for fellow Australians?”

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