



**JENNY LEONG MP**

**MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN**

**THE  
GREENS**

**15 July 2021**

**The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP**

Premier

**The Hon. Dominic Perrotet MP**

Treasurer

52 Martin Place

SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Premier and Treasurer,

**Re: Support during lockdown**

I write in relation to the NSW Covid assistance package announced recently as a joint initiative between the NSW and federal governments. While we acknowledge the scale of this announcement and the support it will provide to millions of people, we hold serious concerns for a significant number of people who will not receive support in this package. Some of these people are already the most vulnerable and at risk in our state.

Based on the eligibility criteria on the Services Australia website, any current recipient of an income support payment such as JobSeeker, Austudy or the Disability Support Payment, are not eligible for the new individual disaster payment.

It is well known that the current rate of JobSeeker is below the poverty line and during the first lockdown; this was addressed by the introduction of the jobseeker supplement. The circumstances this time are the same, but there is no supplement being offered. Many JobSeeker recipients rely heavily on other services just to get by, and during the lockdown many of these services are not available (e.g. - libraries to keep warm and access internet, community organisations to get free hot meals, access to essentials, and help with social isolation). While I understand that JobSeeker is a federal government payment, if they are not willing to step up to provide the necessary financial support to those on income support it is crucial that the NSW Government step in to provide this, like you have done in expanding the support packages throughout regional NSW, to ensure that no members of our community are left behind.

More broadly, the exclusion of income support recipients also ignores the obvious fact that many rely on part time or casual work to supplement their income. As a result of these restrictions, these people are unable to work, have lost shifts, no longer have a job and are therefore financially worse off. This includes thousands of students, part-time, workers, young and underemployed people, single parents, and families who are already doing it tough - many of whom have been bearing the brunt of the pandemic since March 2020.



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We also hold grave concerns about the lack of support for non-citizens such as international students, refugees and other visa holders - the communication about whether or not these people are eligible for the various supports remains unclear. It is crucial that these valued members of our community are able to access all of these supports - and that access to these are made available in the same way as to citizens. During the last lockdown, non-citizens were some of our hardest hit by loss of income and received no government support. Many were forced to rely on community organisations for food and other essentials.

No one in NSW should be forced to choose whether to risk breaking the health restrictions or being able to pay rent or put food on their table. By excluding people from this support package, this is exactly what people will be forced to do. It is unacceptable that any group of people are being excluded from assistance during a lockdown which may go on for many weeks.

We are in the midst of an incredibly difficult time and I ask you both to show compassion for all people in NSW by expanding access to the disaster relief payments to include anyone in NSW who is in a precarious position or losing income.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Leong', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Jenny Leong MP**  
**Member for Newtown**