

JULY 31, 2019

Youth Peak Bodies Across Australia Call on the Government to Raise the Rate

Youth peak bodies across Australia join ACOSS and others in calling on the Government to Raise the Rate of Newstart and Youth Allowance.

Young people and others who receive the Newstart allowance are struggling to survive on just \$282 a week.¹ This is more than \$100 below the poverty line, and is clearly insufficient to live on and cover the costs of looking for work.²

Youth Allowance, received by younger people who are studying, completing an apprenticeship or looking for work, is even lower.³

The Business Council of Australia has stated the current rate of Newstart is so low that it is acting as a barrier for people seeking work.⁴ Young people on Newstart and Youth Allowance are unable to afford food and secure housing, along with suitable clothing, public transport, internet access and a phone, all of which are essential to secure a job in today's economy. This creates further disadvantage and stress in a job market with only one job available for every eight people seeking work.⁵

Importantly, Newstart cannot be seen as a simple transition support that people receive temporarily during short periods of unemployment. The average Newstart allowance time period is 147 weeks, or nearly three years. Even young people, who receive Newstart for a significantly shorter period of time than any other age group, still receive it for 46 weeks (nearly a year) on average.⁶

¹ Department of Human Services. (2019). *Newstart Allowance*. Retrieved from <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/newstart-allowance>

² Social Policy Research Centre. (2016). *Poverty in Australia* (5th ed). Retrieved from <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Poverty-in-Australia-2016.pdf>

³ Department of Human Services. (2019). *Youth Allowance*. Retrieved from <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/youth-allowance>

⁴ Business Council of Australia. (2012). *Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Adequacy of the Allowance Payment System for Jobseekers and Others*. Retrieved from <https://www.bca.com.au/submission-to-the-senate-inquiry-into-the-adequacy-of-the-allowance-payment-system-for-jobseekers-and-others>

⁵ Australian Council of Social Services. (2019). *Raise the Rate*.

⁶ Department of Social Services.

Nationally, there are 62,526 young people receiving Newstart and 222,885 receiving Youth Allowance. It is critical that these young people are able to more than just survive, and are not further disadvantaged and stigmatised in their aspirations and efforts to find decent work.

All of the youth peak bodies around Australia, Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, Youth Affairs Council Victoria, Youth Action NSW, Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Youth Network of Tasmania and Youth Coalition of the ACT, call on the government to Raise the Rate of Newstart and Youth Allowance.

This will support vulnerable and marginalised young people across Australia to live with security and gain meaningful long-term employment.

Attributable quotes to Katie Acheson, Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, Chair

“While the cost of living has increased astronomically in the last 25 years, Newstart and Youth Allowance have not.”

“It is a disservice to young Australians that Newstart and Youth Allowance have not increased in real terms during their lifetime.”

“Raising the rate of Newstart and Youth Allowance is what we pay taxes for, so that we have what we need when we need it, it is why we have schools, we have hospitals, we have roads, and we have social security.”

“It’s time for an increase.”

Attributable quotes to Katherine Ellis, Youth Affairs Council Victoria, CEO

“Newstart and Youth Allowance rates must be increased to genuinely support young people to live with security and take action to find employment.”

“It is extremely difficult for young people to exist solely on Newstart or Youth Allowance, especially for such long periods of time. People receiving Newstart regularly skip meals, restrict their use of gas and electricity, and buy only second-hand clothing.⁷”

Signatories of this statement



⁷ Australian Council of Social Services. (2019). *Trying to Get By on Newstart*. Retrieved from <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/190729-Survey-of-people-on-Newstart-and-Youth-Allowance.pdf>



About the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition

The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) is the national voice representing both the 4.5 million young people across Australia and the thousands of organisations that support them to participate fully in Australian society.

AYAC works to ensure an Australia where all young people are actively engaged in their education, their families and communities, are heard by policy makers and proudly participate in a vibrant Australian democracy.

Media contact: Katie Acheson, AYAC Chair, katie@youthaction.org.au, 0412708964

About Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic)

Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) is the peak body and leading advocate for young people aged 12–25 and youth workers in Victoria. Our vision is that young Victorians have their rights upheld and are valued as active participants in their communities.

YACVic leads policy responses to issues affecting young people, represents the youth sector to government, resources high quality youth work practice, research and advocate on youth issues. We value our members and prioritise their needs.

Media contact: Katherine Ellis, YACVic CEO kellis@yacvic.org.au, 0432401656

Secondary contact: Luke Rycken, YACVic Policy Manager, 0416881511

About Youth Affairs Council of South Australia

Youth Affairs Council of South Australia Inc. (YACSA) is the peak body representing the interests of young people aged 12-25 years and organisations and networks throughout the non-government youth sector.

YACSA is an independent, member-based organisation that works with and for its members to achieve meaningful improvements in the quality of young people's lives.

Media contact: Anne Bainebridge, YACSA CEO, anne@yacsa.com.au, 0417863089

About Youth Affairs Council of WA

Youth Affairs Council of WA (YACWA) is Western Australia's peak body representing young people and the workforce that supports young people. We operate primarily as a human rights organisation that seeks to address the exclusion of young people in a rapidly changing society.

With over 100 organisational members, alongside thousands of young people and youth workers from across Western Australia, we are a movement of people, centered on the needs of young people, mobilised to speak truth to power.

Media contact: Ross Wortham, YACWA CEO, ceo@yacwa.org.au, 0450085562

About Youth Affairs Network of Queensland

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ), is the peak body representing the youth sector in Queensland. With over 660 members from across the state, YANQ undertakes research and represents the interests of young people and the youth sector at policy and advocacy level.

Media contact: Siyavash Doostkhah, YANQ Director, director@yanq.org.au, 07 3844 7713

About Youth Action NSW

Youth Action is the peak organisation representing New South Wales' 1.4 million young people and the services that support them. Our work helps build the capacity of young people, youth workers and youth services, and we advocate for change on issues affecting these groups. We have deep roots in NSW, with 190 organisational members, 593 young members and 89 individual members.

Media contact: Katie Acheson, Youth Action NSW CEO, katie@youthaction.org.au, 0412708964

About Youth Network of Tasmania

Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) is the peak youth body for the non-government youth sector in Tasmania. YNOT has input into and responds to policy direction, advocates for the youth sector and lobbies for the needs and initiatives of young people.

Integral to the work of YNOT is the youth participation structure, known as the Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF).

TYF is Tasmania's peak youth consultative and participatory body. Its members are 12 to 25 years of age, who gather together to discuss issues that affect the youth of Tasmania.



Media contact: Tania Hunt, YNOT CEO, ceo@ynot.org.au, 03 6223 5511

About Youth Coalition of the ACT

We believe in a world for, by and with young people. The Youth Coalition of the ACT is the peak youth affairs body in the ACT. As a membership based organisation, the Youth Coalition is responsible for representing and promoting the rights, interests and wellbeing of the estimated 78,000 young Canberrans aged 12-25 years and those who work with them.

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