



Media Release

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NSW Youth Peak Calls for Meaningful and Permanent Increase Youth Allowance and JobSeeker

At Youth Action, we work towards a society where all young people are valued for their expertise, engaged in decision making and supported by a strong community sector. We aim to elevate the voices of young people to the institutions of power and break down barriers for marginalised communities to become active participants in policy development. This is accomplished through collaborative research, proactive advocacy and asset-based community development.

COVID-19 is affecting everyone. The way we work, live and learn has been disrupted and many people have been pushed into crisis for the first time. Young people however are overrepresented in many of the negative outcomes presented by the pandemic; most notably in employment and job security.

One in three young people were unemployed or under-employed in December as a result of the number of full-time jobs dropping three times more than the general population. Currently, the unemployment rate for young people has not yet returned to pre-COVID levels, presently sitting at **13.9%**, a rate more than twice that of the general population.

A silver lining of the pandemic has been the additional financial supports provided by the Federal Government via the COVID-19 Supplement; marking the first real increased in financial support for more than 20 years.

Prior to the pandemic, the rate for JobSeeker and Youth Allowance sat below the poverty line and even at its highest-level forced hundreds of thousands of young people to live off \$40 a day. The COVID-19 Supplement meant some young people were able to buy fresh fruit and vegetables and pay bills and rent on time for the first time in years.

Many examples of the life changing benefits of a higher support payment level have been highlighted by the Raise the Rate for Good campaign spearheaded by **ACOSS**. While this increase was created in direct response to COVID-19, the impact has been deeply felt by people across the state demonstrating the snap back to \$40 will lead to numerous adverse outcomes.

We are asking all Members of Parliament to carefully consider the ramifications of a social service system that entrenches poverty from a young age and note how a permanent increase in Youth Allowance and JobSeeker will not only support individuals but lead to stronger communities and empowered young people.

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