



**Brotherhood of St Laurence**  
Working for an Australia free of poverty

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Cutting JobSeeker inhumane**

Even with the chaos of another forced lockdown in Victoria and continuing border closures around the country, the government is still yet to announce a decision on the JobSeeker Payment, leaving over a million of Australians in limbo.

An expected cut to the \$75 per week Coronavirus Supplement on 31 March, will force hundreds of thousands of unemployed people to forego necessities.

“The Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, has commented ‘How good is Australia?’. I urge him to listen to the answers of those on JobSeeker, who every day must choose between eating or covering the rent,” said Executive Director of the Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL), Conny Lenneberg.

“Even with the current Coronavirus Supplement, the JobSeeker rate means recipients are faced with heartbreaking decisions about how to spend their money. It’s already inadequate and it would be inhumane to go backwards.

“JobSeeker must be increased to reflect the true cost of living if it is to be an effective support for people in Australia who have found themselves in hard times.”

BSL, along with ACOSS, the RBA and other organisations, is calling for a permanent and adequate rate increase to unemployment payments to lift recipients above the poverty line.

December 2020 ABS data shows that there are about 222,000 more unemployed people compared to before the pandemic in December 2019. Overall, there are more than 1.4 million people on unemployment benefits.

“In the middle of an economic crisis, pulling support from under so many people will have disastrous consequences,” Ms Lenneberg said.

“Government calls for those unemployed to seek work in regional areas fail to recognise the expense associated with looking for work.”

“Unemployed people want to work. They need opportunities and, importantly, to be able to afford the costs of job hunting – internet, transport, accommodation, and appropriate attire,” Ms Lenneberg said.

“It would be prohibitively expensive for those unemployed to pack up their lives and move to another region to take up work when they can’t even afford to dress for an interview around the corner.”

“And what will happen in six weeks’ time to the over 1.5 million people being kept in work by JobKeeper when it ends? How many more will lose their jobs and be forced into hardship? Now’s the time to ensure adequate and fair income support.”

**The Brotherhood of St. Laurence is a social justice organisation working to prevent and alleviate poverty across Australia.**

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