

JobSeeker cut homeless alarm

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Social advocates are concerned decreasing the rate of the JobSeeker welfare payment will contribute to a rise in people experiencing homelessness and poverty.

The Zonta Club of Bunbury has voiced its concern about the impacts a reduction may have on older homeless women living below the poverty line, by writing letters to ministers.

On Tuesday, the Federal Government announced the coronavirus supplement would be slashed from \$550 a fortnight to \$250 come the end of September.

When combined with the \$565 fortnightly JobSeeker payment, the change will leave many recipients on \$815 a fortnight — a significant increase from the previous NewStart allowance of \$489, but still below the poverty line of \$457 a week, according to the Australian Council of Social Service and University NSW Sydney Poverty in 2020 report.

In their letter, Zonta members wrote how women over 55 constituted the fastest-growing demographic within homelessness.

“Whether the cause be separation, domestic abuse, illness or unemployment, there is a need for great financial assistance for this demographic,” it read.

“COVID-19 has exacerbated the issue and since another group has been in crisis, the Government realised it can’t be ignored,” Zonta Bunbury advocacy committee chair Tyril Houghton said.

Committee member Ingrid Hilario said the JobSeeker payment helped people get by and a friend had been able to save \$200 and finally afford to see a specialist.

“If it stays high it’s survivable,” she said.

WA Council of Social Service chief executive Louise Giolitto said the decision to slash the coronavirus supplement by \$300 would needlessly force millions of Australians into poverty.

“With these cuts we will only see more people unable to put food on the table to feed their children, struggling with mounting debts and to keep a roof over their head,” Ms Giolitto said.

“This is a cruel decision that leaves many staring down the barrel of enduring hardship.”



Zonta Bunbury president Diane Tate with advocacy committee member Ingrid Hilario and chair Tyril Houghton sign their letter to ministers. Picture: Ailish Delaney