

MEDIA RELEASE

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CHANGE OF HEART DELIVERS WELCOME RELIEF - BUT MORE NEEDED

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council welcomes the Government's decision to extend the one-off Energy Assistance Payment to people receiving Newstart and Youth Allowance.

At the same time the Council reiterates that a lasting increase to support payments is urgently needed to ease the poverty experienced by those on the lowest incomes.

People on Newstart and Youth Allowance were initially excluded from the 'energy assistance' budget sweetener, which is worth \$75 to singles and \$125 for couples. Prior to the backflip, the one-off payment had been restricted to age pensioners, carers, disability support pensioners, single parents and veterans.

"We know that for people on the lowest incomes, every dollar counts," said Claire Victory, President of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council. "The Government's decision to extend the Energy Assistance Payment is a welcome acknowledgement that Newstart is simply not enough to cover energy costs and everyday expenses."

While acknowledging the one-off payment will help Newstart recipients with cost of living pressures, the Society urged all Parties to commit to increasing Newstart and related payments.

"The \$75 will of course be welcomed by recipients of Newstart and Youth Allowance, but surely action on increasing Newstart would be a better long-term outcome?"

"We are pleased Newstart recipients will receive some temporary relief from cost of living pressures, but enduring solutions are needed to overcome poverty, not one-off payments," said Ms Victory.

"We are heartened by this concession that more is needed to ease the poverty of those on Newstart, and we encourage all parties to commit to an ongoing increase to income support payments to ease the poverty of those on the lowest incomes."

"To support those struggling to cover the basics, like food, housing and energy bills, while they look for paid work in today's competitive job market, we must increase Newstart by \$75 per week," said Ms Victory.

Contact Officer: 0400 845 492 or media@svdp.org.au