



Media Release
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UNITINGCARE AUSTRALIA CALLS FOR DECISION MAKERS TO TRY LIVING ON \$17 A DAY

UnitingCare Australia today reiterated its support for an essential, modest increase of \$50 a week in unemployment benefits, as Greens' senator Rachel Siewert attempts to live on Newstart for the next week.

National Director, Lin Hatfield Dodds said Senator Siewert's efforts will help raise awareness of the issues facing unemployed people and their families who live well below the poverty line.

"It will be difficult enough coping with the cost of living on \$17 a day for the next week once rent and utilities have been taken out, but observers, commentators and policy makers might consider the plight of people who have been surviving on unemployment benefits for over a year," Ms Hatfield Dodds said.

"I encourage every politician and every policy maker to consider living on \$17 a day for a week to get a taste of how hard life is on Newstart.

"Inadequate support is forcing vulnerable people into deeper poverty entrenching their disadvantage and making it more difficult for them to get a job.

"Poverty is isolating. It strips people of their capacity to be part of their community.

"Even if people are lucky enough to find accommodation with modest rent, people on unemployment benefits cannot afford travel, clothes or a pair of shoes. Internet access becomes a thing of the past. It's impossible to replace white goods that break down, and buying a gift for a family member is a luxury.

"Unemployment benefits have not been adequately indexed since 1980.

"UnitingCare Australia supports calls for a minimum of \$50 a week increase in unemployment benefits to establish closer parity with the aged pension, and indexation in line with average weekly male earnings.

"This year's Federal Budget must ensure that every Australian has enough income to live a decent life."

The UnitingCare network provides social services to over 2 million people each year in 1,300 sites in remote, rural and metropolitan Australia. The network employs 35,000 staff and 24,000 volunteers.

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