

Why JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and related payments need to increase

Key facts

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Why JobSeeker and related payments need to be substantially increased

- There are more than one million people receiving JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and related payments that are well below all measures of adequacy including poverty lines (EIAC, 2024¹; DSS March 2024).
- The single rate of JobSeeker Payment is just \$55 a day. Youth Allowance is even less at \$45 a day. This compares with the pension at \$80 a day, and the minimum wage of \$130 per day (before tax).
- JobSeeker Payment is 42% of the minimum wage.
- JobSeeker Payment continues to be the lowest unemployment payment in the first two months of unemployment in the OECD (EIAC, 2024).
- In [late 2023, the OECD recommended Australia](#) lift unemployment payments highlighting that they 'remain below the relative poverty line'.
- In 1993, JobSeeker Payment was the equivalent of 90% of the Age Pension. Today, it's 69%. It is \$172 a week less than the pension (see graph 1 below).
- JobSeeker Payment is not a short-term payment. Almost 70% (547,000) of people receiving JobSeeker have received income support for 12 months or more (DSS, 2024).
- The median asset value held by someone receiving JobSeeker Payment is \$4,500 (EIAC 2024).
- Our latest report on how people receiving JobSeeker and Youth Allowance are faring found:
 - 94% of people renting privately are in rental stress, paying more than 30% of their income on rent.
 - 64% are eating less or skipping meals while 71% are cutting back on meat, fresh fruit, vegetables and other fresh items.

¹ Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee (2024) 'Report to Government', available at: https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/04_2024/economic-inclusion-advisory-committee-2024-report.pdf

- 68% are cutting back on heating or cooling their homes, 54% are cutting back on using lights, and 50% are taking fewer hot showers
 - Three quarters had trouble affording the medicine or medical care they needed.
 - 92% said that the low rate of income support harmed their mental health and 88% said it harmed their physical health.
 - 81% said they use their car less than normal, and a further 9% don't use their car at all. 65% had difficulty getting to work or appointments.
- The [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#) found that suicide rates among people receiving JobSeeker and the Disability Support Pension are much higher than the broader population. People who received unemployment payments accounted for 20% of all suicides in 2019 for people aged 15-66 years.

Key ask

- ACOSS calls for JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and related payments to be increased to at least \$80 a day, in line with the pension, and indexed to wages as well as prices.

Graph 1. JobSeeker Payment compared with the pension and wages, 1990-2024 (2024 dollars).

