

Media Release

21/07/2020

The COVID supplement needs to be retained

The full COVID supplement to JobSeeker payments should have been maintained until it was replaced with a permanent, adequate payment, according to Kate Wheller, Executive Officer, Community Information and Support Victoria (CISVic). She said: 'the Government should not be cutting a temporary payment at a time of great uncertainty and insecurity'.

Kate Wheller was responding to the Federal Government's announcement that the Coronavirus Supplement will be reduced to \$250 per fortnight from 25 September and will be kept in place until 31 December. This will mean the JobSeeker rate until 31 December will be \$824 per fortnight (including the energy supplement). This is a reduction of \$300 a fortnight on current levels.

According to Kate Wheller, 'this will come as distressing news for people on JobSeeker and other income support payments. Many are telling us they need every cent they are currently receiving just to cover the basics – housing, groceries, bills, transport'.

Also commenting on job search requirements being gradually introduced from August, she said: 'cutting already low incomes by \$300 per fortnight in September is deeply concerning, especially when more people than ever before will struggle to find paid work, with one job available for every 13 people who are looking.'

'It is of further concern that people face another cut just after Christmas. The full supplement should have been maintained until it was replaced with a permanent, adequate payment.'

Kate said: 'As we rebuild after the crisis, we cannot turn our back on those who are at risk of being left behind. We need to raise the Centrelink rate for good so that everyone has enough to cover the basics of life, like a roof over one's head and food on the table'.

CISVic is the peak body representing local community information and support services. These services assist people experiencing personal and financial difficulties by providing information, referral and support, including emergency relief. CISVic agencies deliver over \$3 million of emergency relief annually to people in need.

For more information or for media comment please contact Kate Wheller, Executive Officer, Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic) at kate@cisvic.org.au, or phone 9672 2000 0407 670 125.