

15 July 2019

Mr Adam Bandt MP
Member for Melbourne
296 Brunswick Street
Fitzroy, VIC, 3065

Dear Mr Bandt,

Re: Raise the Rate

I am writing on behalf of Uniting to ask that you support any proposals in the new Parliament that look to raise the rate of Newstart, Youth Allowance and related payments.

Uniting is the community services organisation of the Uniting Church. We have worked alongside local communities across Victoria and Tasmania for over 100 years. We deliver a broad range of services in the areas of disability, mental health, crisis and homelessness, financial well-being, early learning and employment. We see the impact of low income and inadequate social security payments on individuals and families across our services. People are unable to enjoy the full benefits of long-term supports like training and employment services because they are consumed by financial stress and meeting immediate needs.

The reality is that Newstart is not working. That's because it no longer covers the basics. The current rate is about \$150 a week below the standard poverty line.

Nearly one million Australians receive income support through Youth Allowance or Newstart. Over 8,000 of them live here in the City of Melbourne. The vast majority of these people want nothing more than to get their lives back on track – find a home to live in, get a job and pay off their debts. Instead they are unable to find stable accommodation and forced to take on high cost credit.

The community sector is not alone in highlighting the need for an increase in these payments. The Business Council of Australia in its Plan for a Stronger Australia released earlier this year, called for an increase because it is, as they say, the right thing to do. They consider that Newstart now acts as a barrier to getting back to work.

I know that this is an issue that you support. I hope you will continue to do so and will support moves by any political party to make the change that is so needed for many of our country's most vulnerable people.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the impact of low-income support payments on our service users. To arrange a time to meet or if you have any queries, please contact my office on 03 9192 8102 or by emailing me at Paul.Linossier@vt.uniting.org

Yours sincerely,



Paul Linossier
Chief Executive Officer