



ABN: 37 982 149 059

7th July 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

The Council to Homeless Persons Queensland (CHPQ) is a collaboration of homelessness services operating in Queensland. We are an unfunded Incorporated Association with a broad membership base and an active and committed Board of Management. We aim to represent the diversity of service providers in the homelessness sector and to use our combined voice to advocate for service users and their rights.

Our values are embedded in a culture of creativity and innovation, support and teamwork, generosity of spirit to each other and our service users, and a focus on quality service delivery that recognises the complexity of need as well as the imperative for change.

We believe that responses to homelessness must respect the dignity of the person and embrace the diversity of service user's experiences. This includes an empowering approach where the aim is to reduce the powerlessness a person experiences due to negative impacts on a person's life situation.

As a collective of homeless services throughout QLD we believe that "Housing stress" is a significant issue with rent for young people sitting at 100% of their income. Housing costs are on average the most important single expenditure item relative to income. This can significantly reduce the capacity of people to adequately cope with all the other needs. We would like to have it noted that the recent increase in the level of Newstart/Jobseeker, Youth Allowance, due to Covid-19, has had a very positive impact and has significantly reduced the need for these clients to rely on emergency relief and other welfare payments, this level of payments needs to be continue.

We support the Australian Council of Social Service's 'Raise the Rate' campaign calling on the federal government to lift the single rate of Newstart/Jobseeker, Youth Allowance and other related payments.

As frontline services, we see the enormity of the problem and the effects it has on the overall well-being, of an individual, families and the community. Our services provide meals, food, care, and support for those who are unemployed, hungry, living on the streets, escaping domestic violence, lonely and struggling with life.

The Council want to stress that young people are already experiencing low to no employment opportunities in most of our regions. The Youth and Newstart/Jobseeker allowance are not remotely enough income to pay for their rent, and then also cover food, electricity and travel costs to go and look for work. As quoted from a recently released Report by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Queensland's youth unemployment rate was 12.8% above the national rate of 11.2%. The report also stated that an estimated 55,400 young people aged 15 to 24 were unemployed in Queensland in December 2018. It also stated that 11.2% national youth unemployment rate is more than twice Australia's overall unemployment rate (5%) at December 2018, and almost three times the unemployment rate of those aged 25 and over.

Governments have a duty to provide a safety net for those who need it.

The Newstart/Jobseeker payment is \$555.70 a fortnight for a single person without children, or \$40 a day, and for those on Youth Allowance \$462.50 or just \$33 a day. CHPQ believes It needs to be raised if we want to make an impact in supporting people getting into long-term housing, education or being able to go into employment.

We question why the jobseeker rate for a single person is different to that of a young person - the costs they incur in day to day living are the same -we ask what is the justification for this false dichotomy in income?

Low unemployment benefits have an impact on maintaining the health of people who are already exposed to stressful life events and economic insecurity. Government has a responsibility to provide sufficient income support to minimize the psychologic impacts of unemployment and the stigma that surrounds not contributing to the family and the community.

Improving systems and reducing poverty is a continuous focus of the Council. With our members, we call for a reform of the Newstart/Jobseeker and Youth Allowance rates to better respond to the needs of complex situations.

It is on the foundation of equality that our socio-economic development should be based. It means that as societies, we do not leave people behind and we see potential in everyone.

Kind Regards

A. Cole

Alison Cole

President

(List of members of CHPQ)

- Australian Red Cross
- ACRO
- BABI Youth & Family Service
- Brisbane Youth Service (BYS)
- Carinity Orana
- Clare Homes Uniting Care Community
- Community Accommodation & Support Agency, Mackay
- Community Housing Industry Association Qld (CHIA Qld)
- Encircle
- Footprints Inc.
- Gateway Community Group Inc.
- HART 4000 Community
- inCommunity Inc.
- Kingston East Neighbourhood Group (KENG)
- North East Community Support Group (NECSG)
- The MARA Project
- Q Shelter
- Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS)
- Queensland Youth and Family Support Services (QYFSS)
- Regional Housing Ltd, Central QLD
 - Bundaberg
 - Fraser Coast
 - North Burnett
 - South Burnett
- Salvation Army Youth Outreach Service
- Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre
- Southside Community Care
- YFS
- Youth Housing Project (YHP)
- Youth Housing and Reintegration Services (YHARS), CTC Employment, Rockhampton
- Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre