

30 July 2019

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Time to raise the white flag and Raise the Rate**

The Coalition Government should concede defeat in the face of sustained community pressure to raise the rate of the Newstart allowance says Baptist Care Australia.

“There’s growing recognition across the community, business and all sides of politics that the Newstart allowance is too low,” says Marcia Balzer, Executive Director of Baptist Care Australia, the peak body for Baptist Care community service organisations.

“People and families are being pushed into destitution, and can’t afford the things they need to move into paid employment. Heating, food, rent, and healthcare are all put at risk when people try to live on \$40 per day.

“The Coalition Government needs to take firm action. We have more than enough evidence that there is a serious problem. We have the ability to fix it,” Ms Balzer said.

“There are currently more than 700,000 Australian children living in poverty, and we know that this experience often affects kids over their lifetime.

“Increasing Newstart and Youth Allowance would be the single most important step to get serious about tackling poverty, and provide much-needed stimulus to a lagging economy.

“A parliamentary inquiry is welcome, but the need is urgent. We can’t wait months. We need to raise the rate now.

“We can’t just stop at a single token increase either. The real rate of Newstart hasn’t increased in 25 years, and we need to make sure it keeps up with increases to the cost of living in future.

“An independent commission to set the rate of social security payments is the way to ensure fair, decent standards of living for all Australians. We need to take the politics out of this issue,” Ms Balzer said.

Baptist Care Australia supports an immediate increase to Newstart of at least \$75 per week. An independent social security commission should be established to ensure that government payments reflect changes to the cost of living over time. This would be similar to the role of the Commonwealth Remuneration Tribunal which sets standards relating to the salaries and benefits paid to federal politicians.

**ENDS**

**Media Contact:** Marcia Balzer, Executive Director, 0430 175 310 [marcia.balzer@baptistcareaustralia.org.au](mailto:marcia.balzer@baptistcareaustralia.org.au)

[Baptist Care Australia](http://BaptistCareAustralia.org.au) works to bring equality and opportunity to Australian communities. We are a voice for hope, speaking out for a fair society that includes and respects everyone. Our advocacy is backed by the practical care and support our members give to thousands of people each year across the country.