

MEDIA RELEASE: Port Adelaide Enfield Makes History On Newstart

The City of Port Adelaide Enfield made history on Tuesday August 8th, becoming the first local government in Australia to publicly advocate for Newstart Allowance to be increased.

The unprecedented decision came after weeks of sustained lobbying by Anti-Poverty Network SA, local residents, welfare recipients, and others.

Anti-Poverty Network SA spokesperson Pas Forgione said, 'the City of Port Adelaide Enfield has demonstrated courage and leadership by sticking up for its unemployed residents – residents living in poverty and struggling to find work in a very tough labour market.

We are glad they recognised the strong arguments for why Newstart needs to be raised. Good for the local community, good for local business, good for local job-seekers – it's a no-brainer.

We hope other Councils will follow. While only the federal government can raise Newstart, there is a need for Councils to speak up, alongside the many business, community, welfare, and union groups calling for Newstart to be raised', Mr. Forgione said.

None of Australia's welfare payments are generous, but Newstart, at \$267 per week (\$14,500 per year), is \$160 per week (\$8,000 per year) below the poverty-line. We also know that:

- Newstart has not been raised in real terms since 1994.
- Australia ranks second-worst in the developed world for rates of poverty among the unemployed.
- Newstart has fallen behind the rest of the community – it is now less than 18 percent of the average wage and less than 41 percent of the minimum wage.

Roughly **5,100 Port Adelaide Enfield residents are unemployed**, for an **unemployment rate of 8.6 percent**, significantly above the South Australian average.

Heather Eckermann, a Newstart recipient and casual worker from Windsor Gardens, told the Mayor and Councillors:

'Financially, it is almost impossible to plan beyond the next pay day, long-term planning on unemployment benefits just does not exist.

Christmas time during my periods of unemployment was always the hardest for me personally. I get a \$60 blouse from my grandmother while I give her a \$5 hankie. Yes I know, it's the thought that counts, family togetherness and so forth. But still I'd like to be able to think about my grandmother with a \$20 note instead of \$5.

A rise in Newstart payments will take away the stress of living in poverty, and allows people to focus on life in a more positive light and creates a healthier lifestyle. By increasing unemployment benefits, we don't have to live in poverty, we can live with dignity.'

INFO: Anti-Poverty Network SA spokesperson Pas Forgione: 0411 587 663 or antipovertynetwork.sa@gmail.com.