

Older Australians suffering due to political inaction on Newstart

National Seniors Australia, COTA Australia and The Benevolent Society have issued a joint statement about the importance of Newstart Allowance to older workers.

In the 2019 Budget the Treasurer either forgot or chose to ignore the poverty suffered by Newstart recipients. Then the Opposition leader did the same in his reply.

Older workers have been largely ignored in the public discussion about the inadequacy of Newstart, but we can't forget or ignore the impact of the inadequacy of Newstart payments on older workers. The facts are that:

- There are more workers aged 55-64yrs receiving Newstart than any other age cohort (See Department of Social Security figures below)
- Older workers spend longer on Newstart than any other age cohort (See Department of Social Security figures below)

The Government, the Opposition, and the Parliament must all agree there's an urgent need to increase the Newstart Allowance. A commitment to a fair go in Australia demands it.

Older workers are too often excluded from the workforce simply because of their age. It's a situation that won't be changed by pushing them into poverty. Unemployment at the end of your working life means the loss of vital savings needed to avoid poverty in retirement and later life.

The inadequacy of Newstart is undermining the retirement income system. It's pushing older workers into poverty as they head to retirement. This is especially the case for those who rent, who have not been able to accumulate significant savings and those facing high out-of-pocket health costs. The rate of Newstart has to be increased. It hasn't been for decades. It's time now to raise the rate.

An immediate increase to Newstart is a commitment to the wellbeing of older Australians. This election is the time to make this happen. The evidence of the impact of inadequate Newstart payments is readily available, there's no need for further review.

Our organisations support the Raise the Rate campaign, and call on all parties and interests in the Parliament to resolve this issue affecting hundreds of thousands of lives.

FOR ALL MEDIA ENQUIRIES – INCLUDING INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES – PLEASE CONTACT:

COTA Australia: Bronte Kerr | M: 0411 676 269 or Ian Yates M: 0418 835 439

National Seniors Australia: Katrina Wotten | M: 02 6133 7915

The Benevolent Society: Lisa Hresc | M: 0421 761 332 or Susan Darwiche M: 0414 706 704

COTA Australia promotes, improves and protects the wellbeing of older people in Australia as citizens and consumers. It is recognised by government, the general community and media as the peak body representing, advocating for and serving all older Australians.

National Seniors Australia was established in 1976 as a consumer lobby for older Australians, and is today involved in advocacy and research. National Seniors Australia fights hard for the rights and better outcomes for all seniors.

The Benevolent Society is Australia’s oldest charity, and is campaigning for the interests of older Australians through the Fix Pension Poverty campaign.

Newstart recipients by age group, December 2018

Australia						
21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over	Total
62,526	149,819	157,952	168,683	173,196	10,747	722,923

Data source Department of Social Services

Recipients of Newstart Allowance by age and average duration on payment (weeks). March 2018

Age Group	Female	Male	Total
	Average duration on payment (weeks)	Average duration on payment (weeks)	Average duration on payment (weeks)
Under 25	45	46	46
25-29	101	105	104
30-34	118	129	125
35-39	134	143	139
40-44	150	158	154
45-49	168	167	168
50-54	185	178	182
55-59	191	185	188
60-64	187	188	187
65+	188	190	189
Total	151	144	147

Data source Department of Social Services