



EQUALITY AND COMPASSION

Lifting income support

Caring. Compassionate. Fair.

The Greens want a stronger social safety net and adequate income support. The Greens will lift key payments including Newstart, provide single parents with more support, and reverse Coalition cuts to income support. This will provide support to vulnerable people, and help combat poverty and inequality.

A just, democratic and sustainable society depends on everyone having access to an adequate income. That's why Australia needs a strong social safety net that gives people the support they need.

There has been no real, legislated increase to Newstart, the unemployment payment, in over two decades.¹ Income inequality is growing in Australia and many people battle daily with poverty.² Research shows that Australia is on track to deliver a fall in average living standards for the 40 per cent of households with the lowest incomes.³

That's why the Greens are committing to real increases in key income support payments. The Greens will:

- **Increase single rates of Newstart Allowance and independent Youth Allowance by \$55 a week.** This will provide increased support for more than half a million people across Australia.
- **Move single parents from Newstart to Parenting Payment Single, and removing the pause in income thresholds.** This will help more than 90,000 single parents across Australia.
- **Reverse Coalition cuts to income support,** including the income support waiting period for young people.

> INCREASING NEWSTART

Australia's key unemployment payment, Newstart, hasn't had a real, legislated increase in over two decades.⁴

¹ The Conversation, [Election FactCheck Q&A: is it true Australia's unemployment payment level hasn't increased in over 20 years?](#)

² ACOSS, [Inequality in Australia: A nation divided](#), 2015, p. 8; ACOSS, [Poverty in Australia](#), 2014, p. 7.

³ Anglicare Australia, [Who is being left behind? State of the Family Report](#), October 2015.

⁴ The Conversation, [Election FactCheck Q&A: is it true Australia's unemployment payment level hasn't increased in over 20 years?](#)

A single person on Newstart receiving the maximum payment has to live on \$37.40 a day. This is less than half the minimum wage.⁵ The Australian Council of Social Services estimates that 55 per cent of people relying on Newstart live below the poverty line.⁶ A survey of Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients found almost a quarter had gone without meals in the last year.⁷

Social services organisations, unions and business groups have all called for Newstart to be increased, but the old parties have failed to take action.⁸

The Greens will take immediate action to **increase the single rate of Newstart Allowance and independent Youth Allowance by \$55 a week**. Costings by the Parliamentary Budget Office show this will cost **\$10.2 billion over the forward estimates**.

This change will lift payments for more than half a million people across Australia, helping those struggling with poverty. A fairer income support system will also help fight inequality in Australia.

> SUPPORT FOR SINGLE PARENTS

Single parent families are some of the most disadvantaged in Australia. The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) estimates that more than 400,000 single parents, and a third of children in single parent households, live below the poverty line.⁹ Children who struggle with poverty can face worse health, education and employment outcomes as adults.¹⁰

⁵ ['A new start is out of reach when you live below the poverty line'](#), *The Age*.

⁶ ACOSS, [Poverty in Australia](#), 2014, p. 8.

⁷ ['A new start is out of reach when you live below the poverty line'](#), *The Age*.

⁸ [Australian Council of Social Services](#); [Australian Council of Trade Unions](#); [Business Council of Australia](#).

⁹ ACOSS, [Poverty in Australia](#), 2014, pp. 13-22.

¹⁰ Australian Institute of Family Studies, [Early childhood poverty and adult achievement, employment and health](#).

Under John Howard, the Coalition cut off access to Parenting Payment Single for parents with a child aged over 8. They were forced onto a lower, inadequate Newstart rate. Under subsequent ALP changes, many single parents who were exempt from earlier cuts were forced onto Newstart.

The changes have a devastating impact on single parent families. Parents receiving Newstart also have their payments reduced more quickly as they enter work, making it harder to support a family.

The Greens will support single parents, giving them access to an adequate payment, and fighting child poverty. The Greens will make changes that apply from 1 September 2016, to:

- **Lift single parents from Newstart to Parenting Payment Single.** Currently, single parents only receive Parenting Payment Single (PPS) until their youngest child turns 8. Single parents then are forced onto Newstart, an inadequate payment. The Greens will make PPS available for single parents with a youngest child aged up to 16 years.
- **Remove the pause in income thresholds.** As part of the 2014-15 Budget cuts, the Coalition has frozen the income thresholds for Parenting Payment Single. This means that payments are reduced more quickly as parents re-enter work. The Greens will unfreeze this for PPS recipients, making it easier to re-enter the workforce for those who are able to.

This will help more than 90,000 single parents, giving them the support they need as they raise families. Based on the latest costings this will cost **\$1.9 billion over the forward estimates.**

> REVERSING CUTS TO FAMILY PAYMENTS

The Coalition has consistently tried to cut away key family payments, putting children at risk of living in poverty. The Greens will oppose Coalition cuts to family payments (Family Tax Benefit A and Family Tax Benefit B). This will ensure that family payments continue to provide support to hundreds of thousands of families across Australia, and ensure that Coalition cuts don't take effect, including:

- Cuts of up to \$2,602 for a single parent with a 13 year old child relying on income support;
- Cuts of up to \$4,117 for a couple with a joint income of \$80,000, and two children aged 14 and 16, and
- Additional cuts of up to \$324 for parents of large families.

> REVERSING COALITION CUTS TO INCOME SUPPORT

The Coalition has tried to relentlessly attack the social safety net, hurting the most vulnerable in Australian society. The

Greens will continue to block these Coalition cuts in the Senate, including:

- **Removing the waiting period for income support.** The Greens will reverse the Coalition's policy of making young people wait before accessing income support, at a cost of **\$465m.**
- **Unfreezing eligibility thresholds for income support payments.** The Coalition froze thresholds for people accessing income support, making it harder for people to access key payments. The Greens will reverse the freeze, at a cost of **\$161m.**
- **Providing the Clean Energy Supplement.** The Coalition wants to cut the Clean Energy Supplement for people who access income support after September 2016.¹¹ The Greens will reverse this, at a **cost of \$1.4 billion** to avoid having a two tiered system, and support those on low incomes.
- **Providing income support payments for people confined in psychiatric institutions.** The Coalition tried to cut payments for people confined in psychiatric institutions, hurting the most vulnerable. The Greens will reverse this at a cost of **\$35m.**

> REAL COMMITMENT TO A STRONG SAFETY NET

Since the National Commission of Audit and the 2014-15 Budget the Coalition has been trying to cut away at our social safety net, consistently hurting the most vulnerable in our society. The ALP says it is concerned about inequality, but has only stated that it will undertake an 'independent review' for Newstart.¹² Only the Greens are committed to real, immediate action to address poverty and inequality in Australia.

¹¹ [Department of Human Services.](#)

¹² [Growing Together.](#)