



Anti-Poverty Week 2022

Comprehensive Briefing



**Together we can halve child
poverty by 2030**

Let's make sure that all Australian
children and families can cover the basics and
have a secure roof over their heads

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Letter from Anti-Poverty Week National Co-Chairs

17 October 2022

Today marks the 30th year of the declaration of the [International Day for the Eradication of Poverty](#) and the 20th year of Australia dedicating a week to act on poverty – thousands of Australians are joining in to say we can and must, take action to reduce poverty.

This Anti-Poverty Week we are calling on all our Parliamentarians to commit to **halve child poverty by 2030**. This means we can meet our international commitments to the UN Convention on the [Rights of the Child](#) and UN [Global Goals](#) (Sustainable Development Goals).

Most importantly, it means we can meet our responsibilities to our children. New research released on the eve of Anti-Poverty Week - [Poverty in Australia 2022 by ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership](#) - confirmed the shocking fact that 1 in 6 Australian children (761,000 or 16.6%) live in poverty, higher than the 1 in 8 (12.7%) poverty rate for adults. This higher rate of child poverty, compared with adult poverty, has persisted for the past 20 years. The [Foodbank Hunger Report 2022](#) released today finds as many as 1.3 million children in Australia live in food insecure households.

We want you to pass legislation to halve child poverty by 2030, with measurable targets and actions to achieve this goal. The New Zealand Government passed such legislation in 2018 (with support from across their Parliament). They've made great [progress](#) so that fewer children live in poverty. Setting targets enshrined in legislation works and changes lives for the better.

To treat all of Australia's children fairly, we need to ensure every family has what they need. A legislated plan to halve child poverty by 2030 would be a huge step to achieving this.

We invite you **sign our [Pledge to Halve Child Poverty by 2030](#)**; reaching out to community organisations working with people directly affected by poverty and your constituents; and above all, support our immediate call for increases in income support payments, social housing and reviews of family payments and child support so they can all do their job of reducing poverty.

We're excited to see so much activity this Anti-Poverty Week, especially featuring the voices of children and others speaking on their behalf. See the attached briefing for a selection of the key reports and events happening all around the country this week.

You can find more resources on our [website](#), including a number of [Fast Facts](#) on different aspects of poverty or contact our Executive Director at ed@antipovertyweek.org.au

Yours sincerely

Professor Eileen Baldry AO
(National Co-Chair)

Simon Schrapel AM
(National Co-Chair)

Join us to halve child poverty by 2030



Key National Reports and Events

14-22 October 2022

- All Senators and MPs are invited to take our [Halve Child Poverty Pledge](#) see our [Pledge Gallery](#)

Friday 14 October

- ***Poverty in Australia 2022 Snapshot* REPORT** new research report released by ACOSS/UNSW Sydney [Poverty and Inequality Partnership](#).

Monday 17 October

- ***Foodbank Hunger Report 2022* REPORT** released by Foodbank Australia.

Tuesday 18 October

- **Anti-Poverty Week 2022 media release and BRIEFING PAPER – call to Halve Child Poverty by 2030**, focus on single mothers and children
- **Pathways to Eradicating Poverty in Australia, CEDA WEBINAR**, 12-1pm AEDT Speakers include The Hon Amanda Rishworth, Federal Minister for Social Services; Anne Hollonds, National Children's Commissioner; Toni Wren, ED Anti-Poverty Week.

Thursday 20 October

- ***Nothing Left to Give Emergency Relief* REPORT** released by Anglicare Australia.
- **Women's Safety and Financial Security CONFERENCE** ANU Canberra from 8:50am
- **Tackling child poverty through policies and payments, Brotherhood of St Laurence WEBINAR** 12-1:00pm AEDT, Prof. Miranda Stewart, National Children's Commissioner Anne Hollonds, Dina Bowman from BSL and an expert by experience, will explore issues with the current family payment (Family Tax Benefits) system and their impacts on child and family poverty.
- **NAPCAN Webinar on Poverty and Keeping Children Safe**
A conversation with Prof Bridgid Featherstone, UK University of Huddersfield on ground-breaking research from the UK and other countries that shows how poverty and inequality impact the context in which child abuse and neglect occurs, 2-3pm AEDT
- **Senate Inquiry into Poverty** – first public hearings, Abbotsford, Victoria, time tbc



Key State/Territory reports being launched

- **Finding Home – release of white papers on housing and income support** which spotlight affordability and accessibility challenges for people with disabilities, **ACT Advocacy for Inclusion**. 17 October. Also ACT Poverty Fact sheet being released.
- **Aftershock: Addressing the Economic and Social Costs of the Pandemic and Natural Disasters, Report Four - Child Wellbeing and Development** by NCOSS, 19 October.
- **18/10 Can't afford to live: the impact of the rising of cost of living on Victorians and Tasmanians on low incomes– research report launch event**, Melbourne 10:00 – 11:30am, 18 October. Speakers include Greens Senator Janet Rice; APW VIC Co-Chairs Bronwyn Pike, CEO Uniting Vic.Tas and David Tennant, CEO Family Care Shepparton; Prof Erin Wilson, Centre for Social Impact, Swinburne; Emma King, VCOSS CEO.

Key State/Territory events

Australian Capital Territory - ACT Anti-Poverty Week [Launch](#) & release of Poverty in ACT Factsheet. ACT Anti-Poverty Week [Forum](#), Canberra 12:15-1:00pm 17 October AEDT - Fed MP Canberra, Alicia Payne; Director of ANU Children's Policy Centre, Poverty & Inequality Research Centre, Professor Sharon Bessell; ANUSA Student Assistance Advisor, Mr Hassan Riaz; UnionsACT Campaign Organiser, Kasey Tompkins. The National Carillion, Federal Treasury building and [Telstra Tower](#) will be lit up to end poverty. Plus there is be a [Youth Art Competition](#). See more [ACT activities/events](#)

New South Wales – [NCOSS Conference Vision, Voice and Value](#), 17-18 October will feature sessions relevant to Anti-Poverty Week and encourage participants to sign the Halve Child Poverty Pledge and post to social media. See more [NSW activities/events](#).

Queensland – [Community BBQ](#) to launch of APW QLD 16 October. **Is Australia the 'Lucky Country' for all? Panel Discussion** recorded by **ABC RN Big Ideas**, 17 October (on air 20/10) Facilitator Big Ideas host Paul Barclay in discussion with Qld Family and Children's Commissioner Natalie Lewis, ANU Crawford School of Public Policy's Professor Sharon Bessell, QLD Youth & Family Services CEO Cath Bartolo AM, sponsored by HESTA, hosted by The Hon. Jonty Bush, Member for Cooper, organized by PeakCare. **Wesley Mission QLD, Panel Discussion on halving child poverty in Brisbane. Policing Insecurity: Debt, Fraud, Data and the Automated Welfare State, Lecture** University of Qld 19 October. See more [QLD activities/events](#) including lights ups on bridges, banners and street art.

South Australia –Key events by SA Children's Commissioner including Citizen's Jury discussion [Does South Australia need school provided meals?](#) 20 October and **Climate Justice Workshop** 18 October– plus [public space light ups and messages](#) for Anti-Poverty Week. See more [SA activities/events](#)

Tasmania – **Tasmanian Anti-Poverty Week Launch Hobart** 10:30am 18/10, Tasmania Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania, Leanne Mclean; Kim Haworth Divisional Commander, Salvation Army Tasmania; Jeremy Pettet, Executive Officer Tasmania, Uniting Vic.Tas Organisation stalls, children's activities, storytime at Hobart Library. Lights up at University of Tasmania plus lots of community events around Tasmania and radio messages. See more [TAS activities/events](#).



Victoria – Release of child poverty and wellbeing videos created by Centre for Children's Policy at ANU in collaboration with Family Care Shepparton and Uniting Vic. Tas. Launch of research report [Can't Afford to Live](#) by UnitingVic.Tas and Swinburne University Centre for Social Impact, 10-11:30am 19 October. Also events in Geelong and Dandenong. See more [VIC activities/events](#).

West Australia – Let's work together to halve child poverty by 2030 – [Symposium](#) organised by Anti-Poverty Week WA 9:00am-1:00pm 17 October, Government House Perth, WA
The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP Fed Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Youth; Jacqueline McGowan-Jones WA Commissioner for Children and Young People; Assoc Prof Francis Mitrou Program Head, Population Health; Telethon Kids Institute, Glenda Kickett Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Engagement and Therapeutic Services, Aboriginal Children and Families; Australian Childhood Foundation, Bella Burgemeister Youth Advocate; Adj Prof Tony Pietropiccolo AM Director Centrecare Inc; Founder Valuing Children Initiative. A [Community Kitchen](#) with free lunch 18 October, [Roundtable](#) on Poverty in WA, 21 October. Children's videos and social media tiles. See more [WA activities/events](#)

For more information, check the [APW Calendar](#) or contact APW Executive Director Toni Wren ed@antipovertyweek.org.au

Together we can halve child poverty by 2030

Let's make sure that all Australian children and families can cover the basics and have a secure roof over their head. Children can thrive and be healthy when they have what they need to develop well.

Poverty in Australia at 1 in 8 or more than 3 million is far too high for such a wealthy country. The new report, released on the eve of Anti-Poverty Week, [Poverty in Australia 2022 by ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership](#) finds:

- 1 in 6 children in Australia (16.6% or 761,000) are growing up in poverty which continues to be higher than the rate for adults (12.7%). We note these numbers reflect the average for 2019-2020.
- The boost in income support payments provided in the early months of the pandemic delivered large reductions in poverty for adults and children (child poverty rates were reduced to the lowest level in 20 years), but the gains were short-lived.
- While child poverty and overall poverty rates follow similar trends over 20 years (2000-2020), child poverty rates consistently track 3 percentage points higher than rates for the population as a whole.

17 October 2022 marks the 30th year of the declaration of the [International Day for the Eradication of Poverty](#) and the 20th year of Australia dedicating a week to act on poverty.

This Anti-Poverty Week we are calling on all our Parliamentarians to commit to **halve child poverty by 2030**. This means we can meet our international commitments to the UN Convention on the [Rights of the Child](#) and UN [Global Goals](#) (Sustainable Development Goals).

Our Federal Parliamentarians need to pass legislation to halve child poverty by 2030, with measurable targets and actions to achieve this goal.

The New Zealand Government introduced such legislation in 2018 and they've made great [progress](#) so that fewer children live in poverty. Setting targets enshrined in legislation works and changes lives for the better.

To treat all of Australia's children fairly, we need to ensure every family has what they need.

A legislated plan to halve child poverty by 2030 would be a huge step to achieving this.

Sign our [Pledge](#) to Halve Child Poverty by 2030



#EndChildPoverty #AntiPovertyWeek #APW22



In 2022, Anti-Poverty Week is sponsored by:

[Brotherhood of St Laurence](#); [Berry Street](#); [St Vincent de Paul Society](#), [The Smith Family](#); [Anglicare Australia](#); [Uniting Vic/Tas](#); [The Life Course Centre](#) – ARC Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course; [UnitingCare Australia](#); [The Salvation Army](#); [Australian Education Union](#) (Federal); [Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation](#).

2022 State/Territory Co-Chairs include: [ACTCOSS](#), [Care Financial Counselling Service ACT](#); [NCOSS](#); [PeakCare](#) Qld; [NAPCAN](#); [Commissioner for Children and Young People](#) SA, [Baptist Care](#) SA; [Salvation Army Tasmania](#); [Uniting Vic/Tas](#); [Family Care](#) Shepparton; [Centre Care](#) WA, [Foodbank WA](#). **Supporters** include [ACOSS](#), [Everybody's Home](#), [Foodbank Australia](#), [Mission Australia](#) and the [National Council for Single Mothers and Their Children](#).

Child poverty exists and diminishes children's lives now, and in the future

Starting school: *"Growing up in poverty is a strong predictor of a child being developmentally vulnerable by the time they start school."* In 2021, more than 1 in 5 Australian children (22%) were assessed as developmentally vulnerable when they started school, potentially reducing good health, education and social outcomes later in life. [2021 Australian Early Development Census](#).

At school: For one-in-six Australian children who live in poverty, disadvantage at home carries over into disadvantage at school. Children living in poverty have [lower school completion rates](#) and lower scores on national tests such as [NAPLAN](#) and students who live in poverty also experience more social exclusion at school than their more advantaged peers. *"To reduce educational disadvantage, action is needed to reduce child poverty, which has remained stubbornly high since the early 2000s."* Professor Gerry Redmond [The Conversation](#) 10/3/22. **Completing education:** The likelihood of completing high school or university are two to three times lower for children who are persistently poor (poor for at least three years of their childhoods). [2020 HILDA Survey](#).

Health and wellbeing: Developed by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), [The Nest](#) offers a holistic approach to child wellbeing and outlines the profound impact poverty, inequality and disadvantage can have on children's health and wellbeing.

Poverty and Child Safety: led by National Children's Commissioner Anne Hollonds, the [Keeping kids safe and well – your voices](#) report asked children and their families what would help keep children safe and well. The survey found the top three things children, young people and families said they need to feel safe are: help with housing, mental health services, and basic needs, like food, clothing, transport and school supplies.

The future:

"Experiencing just a single year of poverty during childhood is associated with poorer socio-economic outcomes in terms of educational attainment, labour market performance and even overall life satisfaction in early adulthood. Children from poor households are 3.3 times more likely to suffer adult poverty than those who grew up in never poor households." [Melbourne University](#), 2020



We can all do something about it

“We need to make sure that every child gets the opportunity to be the best that they can be, because that helps, not just that individual, that’s the key to Australia as well. We need to be the smart country.”

[PM Anthony Albanese interview on 7.30, 23/6/22](#)

What is driving increases in child poverty?

Some of the reasons child poverty rates are so high are that income support for families, especially sole parent families, have been eroded over many years:

- More than Rent Assistance hasn’t had an increase beyond inflation for more than 22 years and social housing provision is not meeting demand.
- Family payments have been raided for Budget savings such that [real expenditure](#) in 2020-21 is the same as in 2000-01, despite a 20% increase in children aged 0-14 from 2001 to 2021.
- Sole parents whose youngest child is 8 need to claim the punishingly low JobSeeker Payment now (worth only about 66% of age pension), instead of Parenting Payments.
- Those with younger children able to claim Parenting Payments are still paid at a lower rate than the age pension and face harsher income tests.
- The child support system is also not working as it should, with [debts owed to children](#) conservatively estimated to be at least \$2B in 2022.

We know what works

The latest poverty [research](#) released 14/10/22 finds that the child poverty rate rose from 16.2% in the September quarter of 2019 to 19% in the March quarter of 2020, then fell to 13.7% – a two-decade low – in June 2020. The increased payments delivered in the first phase of the pandemic reduced child poverty by a massive 5.3%, giving 245,000 kids in Australia the chance of a better future.

The **ACOSS/UNSW Sydney Poverty and Inequality Partnership** report-[Covid, inequality and poverty in 2020 & 2021](#) found that during the first ‘Alpha’ wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Australia halved poverty and significantly reduced income inequality, thanks to a raft of Commonwealth Government crisis support payments introduced to help people survive the first lockdown. Among sole parent families (both adults and children) poverty was **reduced by almost half**, from 34% to 19%.

“The period during the Covid-19 pandemic when income support payments were lifted was hugely beneficial to children and their families. We saw less anxiety about whether families could meet their basic needs such as food, heating, and shelter. We saw reduced suicides as a result. Income support payments should be set at a level that supports individuals and families to live with dignity and meet their basic needs.”

[Child Health Statement by AMA, ACOSS, ACAH, ARACY, MCRI, RACP](#), 22/2/22

A 2020 London School of Economics [paper](#) examined 54 studies from the EU and OECD that had investigated the causal effects of household financial resources on wider outcomes for children. They were clear that this robust evidence base indicates strongly that money itself makes a difference to children’s outcomes.



Their report concluded “*policies to support household income have a key role to play in any strategy to improve life chances for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. A boost to income affects parenting and the physical home environment, maternal depression, children’s cognitive ability, achievement and engagement in school, and behavior.*”

We’re calling for a commitment to halve child poverty by 2030 but actions which could be taken *now* to reduce child poverty include:

- Increase JobSeeker and related payments so everyone can afford the basics including rent, food, medication and education.
- Build more social housing and increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance so everyone has a safe place to call home.
- Review family payments and child support to ensure they do their job of reducing child poverty and restore parenting payment single eligibility until the youngest child turns 16 not 8.
- Ensure income support and housing feature in the forthcoming final *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–32*.

Please see more from [ACOSS](#), in particular [Raise the Rate for Good](#); [Everybody’s Home](#) and [National Council for Single Mothers and Their Children](#), also [Anti-Poverty Week](#), including [Fast Fact: Child and Family Poverty in Australia](#); [22/7/22 Women, Violence and Poverty Briefing](#) and [18/8/22 Child Support Briefing](#). Contact us: apw@antipovertyweek.org.au



What is it like for children to grow up in poverty?

Growing up in poverty impacts the hopes and dreams of young people.

Kids growing up in poverty too often go to bed or school hungry; they can feel left out if they can't afford to join a local sport team or go on school camps; they may be living in an overcrowded home where there's no quiet place to do homework and they worry about their parents.

The 2021 Unicef/ARACY report shows child poverty in Australia had risen from 17.3% in 2010 to 17.7% in 2017-18, that we were worse in terms of comparison with other OECD countries from 13/41 in 2014 to 15/41 in 2018 and concluded "Poverty too remains stagnant and unacceptably high."¹

In 2021, Foodbank provided food relief to over 1 million people per month and reported 1.2 million children were living in food insecure households.² Their 2018 Hunger Report found that single parents often make personal sacrifices to ensure their children can eat: 3 in 5 single parents experiencing food insecurity skip a meal at least once a week to make sure there is enough food for their family and 1 in 3 go a whole day without eating at least once a week.³

"They're used to hearing, 'I'm OK, I ate while I was cooking' – single mum from Melbourne."³

How many children are living in poverty in Australia?

774,000 children or 1 in 6 Australian children aged 0-14 years lived in poverty in 2017-18 (the latest available data). At 17.7%, the percentage of children living in poverty is higher than the percentage of any other age group – including those aged 65 years and over.⁴



1 in 6

Australian children
aged 0-14 years lived in
poverty in 2017-2018

What can we do to reduce child poverty?

Child poverty in Australia isn't inevitable – we made great strides in the 1990's when the former PM Bob Hawke and his government committed to end child poverty. Child poverty wasn't eliminated but it was reduced by 30%.⁵

A very high proportion of children experiencing poverty are living in families who rely on government payments.⁶ Permanently increasing those payments - family payments, JobSeeker and single parent payments - will reduce poverty.



Children can thrive and be healthy when they have what they need to develop well. To treat all of Australia's children fairly, we need to ensure every family has enough money to cover the basics and a secure roof over their heads.

"The period during the Covid-19 pandemic when income support payments were lifted was hugely beneficial to children and their families. We saw less anxiety about whether families could meet their basic needs such as food, heating, and shelter. We saw reduced suicides as a result. Income support payments should be set at a level that supports individuals and families to live with dignity and meet their basic needs." - **Statement from the AMA** ⁷

The full Coronavirus Supplement saw poverty drop by more than half for the poorest families - those headed by single parents. Poverty rates for these families reduced from 39% to 17%. ⁸

"It has helped me so much in being able to help my child to be clothed and eat more healthy options, to keep my house warm during the winter."

"I have spent the extra money on everything I needed to get employed.. on my vehicle so I can travel to job interviews... on internet to help with being connected for job interviews on Zoom...on clothing so that I look more professional when I'm attending a job interview, whether it is online or face-to-face." ⁹

The Everybody's Home campaign is calling for a large investment in social housing by Federal and State/Territory governments to address the crisis in housing affordability facing too many individuals, families and children in Australia. This would also assist women and children needing to flee domestic violence. ¹⁰

Is poverty just about not having enough money?

"Money isn't the only thing but having some money to buy food and to pay for your rent and stuff is really good." ¹¹

Multiple studies have found that poverty isn't just about not having enough to eat and a secure home. A lack of money limits children and young people's lives and learning and seeps into other aspects of their life.

ARACY's research based on a long term study of children born in 2004 and published in 2019, found children living below the poverty line were more likely to experience deprivation in terms of their relationship with friends, yelling in the home, enjoyment in exercise, adequate fruit and vegetables, mental health, school attendance, learning at home, and involvement in extracurricular activities like sport. ¹²

"The playing field is not level for all Australian children. Those growing up in poverty are less likely to complete high school, find a good job and have stable housing."

They often suffer from poor mental and physical health and social isolation. Devastatingly, we will compromise their life chances if we fail to disrupt the cycle of disadvantage.

— Life Course Centre Director **Professor Janeen Baxter**

"My mum struggles, she gets paid on Thursdays but struggles on the Wednesday. Me and my brother, if there is not food for school, we don't go to school at all. She has never sent us to school with no food." ¹³

Young people are also often keenly aware of what they are missing out on. Research undertaken by The Smith Family and UNSW ¹⁴ found that it was clear that the 14 year olds had a good understanding of what a healthy diet meant but often lacked the ability (due to a lack of money in the household) to ensure that they had a healthy diet. It also found that while many young people acknowledged that a quiet space or desk was the ideal, this was not the case for them.



Does experiencing poverty in childhood restrict secure employment, health and well-being later in life?

If poverty is not addressed early and it continues into later life, children can carry the scars with them into adulthood.

“A significant number of young Australians who grow up in poverty find it difficult to engage with formal education; they leave school early or cannot navigate from education to the world of work.” ¹⁵

“Disadvantage early in a child’s life reverberates throughout childhood and youth and the risks associated with disadvantage and academic adjustment continue and accumulate over time, ultimately affecting the child’s socioeconomic status in adulthood.” ¹⁶

Children who grow up in poverty are 3.3 times more likely to suffer adult poverty than those who grew up in never poor households. ¹⁷

Who are most at risk?

Children living in sole parent families have a poverty rate of 39.4%, 3 times that of couple families (13.1%). ¹⁸

Households that have to rely mainly on social security payments (e.g. unemployment, parenting, and disability payments) are five times more likely to experience poverty (36%) than those receiving most income from wages and salaries (7%). However, 38% of those in poverty are in wage-earning households; the majority of whom are households with children. ¹⁹

When children are growing up in poverty during the first 5 years of their life - ARACY states: “Brain development in the first years of life lays the foundation for language development, literacy acquisition, cognitive processes, emotional development, self-regulation and problem-solving skills and has a lasting impact on health, future learning and life success.”

If poverty **persists over time**. Academics have found children who had been living in persistent poverty until age 8 or 9 were more than 3 times likely to be at risk of psychological clinical problems than children who had never experienced poverty (27% compared to 8%). ²⁰

Children in monetary poverty (that is children living below the poverty line) suffered effects far wider than just their material basics. They are more than 1.7 times more likely to face food insecurity, nearly twice as likely to lack good relationships with friends and almost two and a half times more likely to be missing out on learning at home. ²¹

In 2021, more than 1 in 5 Australian children (22%) were assessed as developmentally vulnerable when they started school, potentially reducing good health, education and social outcomes later in life. “Growing up in poverty is a strong predictor of a child being developmentally vulnerable by the time they start school.” ²²

“For one-in-six Australian children who live in poverty, disadvantage at home carries over into disadvantage at school. Children living in poverty have lower school completion rates and lower scores on national tests such as NAPLAN and students who live in poverty also experience more social exclusion at school than their more advantaged peers.”

- Professor Gerry Redmond [The Conversation](#) 10/3/22

“We need to make sure that every child gets the opportunity to be the best that they can be, because that helps, not just that individual, that’s the key to Australia as well. We need to be the smart country.”

- PM Anthony Albanese, [Interview on 7.30](#), 23/6/22



Why is child poverty increasing?

After 80,000 sole parents were transferred to Newstart Allowance (now JobSeeker) in 2013, payments for a sole parent with school-age children reduced by at least \$60 a week. ²³

Income support for families, especially sole parent families have been eroded over many years:

- Parenting Payments are paid at a lower rate than age or disability pensions;
- Sole parents whose youngest child is 8 need to claim the punishingly low JobSeeker Payment instead of Parenting Payments;
- Rent Assistance hasn't had an increase beyond inflation for more than 22 years; and
- Family payments have been raided for Budget savings such that real expenditure in 2020-21 is the same as in 2000-01. ²⁴

The child support system is also not working as it should, with debts owed to children conservatively estimated to be at least \$2B in 2022. ²⁵

Combined, these changes mean that at March 2022, maximum payments (including rent assistance and all supplements and family payments) for a sole parent:

- with older children (11 and 13 years) is more than \$80 a week below the poverty line;
- with two children aged 8 and 5 years is \$17 a week below the poverty line;
- with two children aged 4 and 2 is just \$8 a week above the poverty line. ²⁶

Produced by Anti-Poverty Week as part of its **Fast Facts** series. Data correct as of 8 August 2022.

For more, visit our website at www.antipovertyweek.org.au.

See also the **Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course** (the [Life Course Centre](http://www.life-course.org.au)) who are delivering transformative research and translation to break the cycle of deep and persistent disadvantage for Australian children and families.

1 The Wellbeing of Australia's Children, <https://www.unicef.org.au/our-work/unicef-in-australia/the-wellbeing-of-australia's-children>

2 Foodbank 2021 Hunger Report, <https://www.foodbank.org.au/foodbank-hunger-report-2021/?state=nsw-act>

3 The Hunger Report 2019, Foodbank, The Hunger Report 2018, Foodbank, October 2018.

4 Davidson, P., Bradbury, B., Hill, T. and Wong, M. (2020), *Poverty in Australia 2020: Who is affected?* ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership Report No. 4, Sydney: ACOSS.

5 Davidson, P., Bradbury, B., Hill, T. and Wong, M. (2020), *Poverty in Australia 2020: Who is affected?* ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership Report No. 4, Sydney: ACOSS.

6 Dina Warren, *Low-Income and Poverty Dynamics: Implications for Child Outcome*, Social Policy Research Paper Nos 47, Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services) 2017.

7 Statement from the AMA, <https://www.ama.com.au/index.php/media/ama-joins-call-child-health-taskforce>

8 Ben Phillips and Vivikth Narayanan, *Financial Stress and Social Security Settings in Australia*, ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, April 2021.

9 Quotes from *550 Reasons to Smile campaign*, National Council of Single Mother and Her Child.

10 *Everybody's Home* and *SHARP* proposal.

11 Quote from child participant, cited in Redmond, G., Skattebol, J., Saunders, P., Lietz, P., Zizzo, G., O'Grady, E., Tobin, M., Thomson, S., Maurici, V., Huynh, J., Moffat, A., Wong, M., Bradbury, B. and Roberts, K. (2016), *Are the Kids Alright? Young Australians in their Middle Years*, Final Report of the Australian Child Well-Being Project, Flinders University, University of New South Wales and Australian Council for Educational Research.

12 Solis, K. (2019). *Measuring Child Deprivation and Opportunity in Australia: Applying the Nest framework to develop a measure of deprivation and opportunity for children using the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*. Canberra: ARACY. Summary report: *To Have and To Have Not - Measuring child deprivation and opportunity in Australia*. 2019.

13 Billie aged 14, cited in Redmond, G., Skattebol, J., Saunders, P., Lietz, P., Zizzo, G., O'Grady, E., Tobin, M., Thomson, S., Maurici, V., Huynh, J., Moffat, A., Wong, M., Bradbury, B. and Roberts, K. (2016), *Are the Kids Alright? Young Australians in their Middle Years*, Final Report of the Australian Child Well-Being Project, Flinders University, University of New South Wales and Australian Council for Educational Research.

14 Material Deprivation and Social Exclusion Among Young Australians: A child-focused approach, Peter Saunders, Megan Bedford, Judith E. Brown, Yuvisthi Naidoo and Elizabeth Adamson, November 2018.

15 Jennifer Skattebol and Gerry Redmond. *Troubled kids? Locational disadvantage, opportunity structures and social exclusion*, 2018.

16 Dina Warren, *Low-Income and Poverty Dynamics: Implications for Child Outcome*, Social Policy Research Paper Nos 47, Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services) 2017.

17 *Breaking Down Barriers report* series (2020). Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, The University of Melbourne.

18 Davidson, P., Bradbury, B., Hill, T. and Wong, M. (2020), *Poverty in Australia 2020: Who is affected?* ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership Report No. 4, Sydney: ACOSS.

19 Davidson, P., Bradbury, B., Hill, T. and Wong, M. (2020), *Poverty in Australia 2020: Who is affected?* ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership Report No. 4, Sydney: ACOSS.

20 Dina Warren, *Low-Income and Poverty Dynamics: Implications for Child Outcome*, Social Policy Research Paper Nos 47, Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services) 2017.

21 *Measuring Child Deprivation and Opportunity in Australia*, February 2019.

22 *AEDC 2021* published in 2022 by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment on behalf of the Australian Government.

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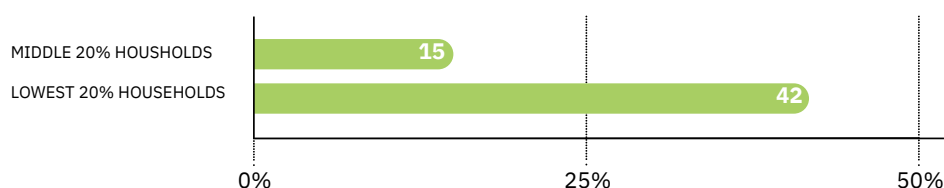


Poverty puts pressure on people – it's constant and strong. If the pressure builds up, people can be pushed into homelessness. We can relieve the pressure on people's lives by creating affordable housing and helping people get decent jobs. We can also help people withstand this pressure by strengthening our social welfare system and ensuring all payments stay above the poverty line. We can end homelessness and increase housing affordability. Investing in social housing is both the right and smart thing to do.

How are housing and poverty linked?

In Australia, increasing housing costs played a major role in keeping the overall poverty rate at around 12-13% from 2009 to 2017, when it would have otherwise declined. (1)

Percentage increase in Average Housing Costs 2005-2017

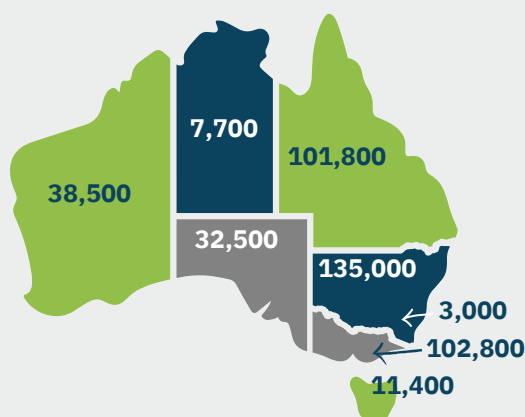


Relying on income support and renting in the private market increases the risk of poverty. For example, in 2017-18, the poverty rate for people aged over 65 years who owned or were purchasing their home was 10%. However, it was more than 4 times that - 41% - for those renting privately. (2)

How many people are homeless or waiting for social housing?

At least 116,000 Australians are homeless on any given night and 190,000 households are on waiting lists for social housing. There is a national shortage of 433,000 homes for people in the lowest 20% of household incomes who are either homeless or in rental stress and at high risk of becoming homeless. (3)

Social Housing Unit Shortfall
2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics Data



432,700 TOTAL

See also these [heat maps](#) of homelessness and social housing need by Federal Electorate. (4)

“The pandemic has shown how vulnerable people are when they don't have a home, and how urgently we need more social housing so that every Australian can have a safe place to live.”

– Chair of Homelessness Australia,
Jenny Smith



FAST FACTS

Poverty & Housing



Before the pandemic, homelessness was already too high

In 2016 there were more than 116,000 people who did not have a place to call home, a 14% increase from 2011. Two out of 5 people facing homelessness were young people under the age of 25.

Domestic violence is also a major reason people become homeless. Family and domestic violence is the main reason women and children leave their homes in Australia. At 40.5%, family and domestic violence was the largest single reason children aged 0-14 received assistance from specialist homelessness services in 2020-21. More than 60,000 (62,107) children received these services. (5)

Drivers of homelessness include high rents, unemployment, low income security payments, increasing domestic violence and a lack of social housing.

Equity Economics published **Nowhere to Go** in July 2021. Commissioned by the Everybody's Home campaign, the report estimated that a lack of social housing is leading to 7,690 women a year returning to violent partners and 9,120 women a year becoming homeless. It found that if the Commonwealth Government invested in 16,800 additional social housing units the \$7.6 billion cost would be dwarfed by immediate economic benefits of \$15.3 billion and the creation of 47,000 new jobs. (6)

“Home ownership rates have collapsed, the share of renters in housing stress is increasing and social housing waiting lists are out of control.”

Martin Sharp, Compass Housing.

Not everybody who is homeless sleeps on the street

While some people end up rough sleeping, many others are couch surfing, living in their car, or are living in other forms of unsafe and unstable accommodation.

When Ashlie lost her full-time job in her late 50s, she quickly found that the low rate of income support did not allow her to live decently. ***“I had to go without at least seven meals in order to afford a haircut. Seeing a medical specialist was now out of the question, let alone a dentist. I had a couple of friends who provided me with some food so I could pay my rent.”*** In April 2020, Ashlie was unable to afford a private rental, and she became homeless. Since then, Ashlie has transitioned between emergency accommodation and staying with friends for short periods of time.

The 2020 response to COVID-19 was a huge relief but it's now gone

Many people already in poverty and reliant on income support lost casual and part-time work. The Coronavirus Supplement (CVS) of \$550 a fortnight added to multiple payments in 2020, including JobSeeker Payment, helped many low-income people pay rent and, in some cases, get the bond together to get into secure accommodation (including those needing to leave domestic violence).

“I’ve been able to buy real ingredients and make proper meals for the kids. My rent is no longer 60% of my total income, and I can buy household items I’ve been needing for years and musical instruments to enrich the children’s lives.” (7)

Case workers at Mission Australia’s NSW Ebbs House completed at least three reference checks in the first month that the payment was paid, meaning these formerly homeless clients had the bond to apply for rental properties. (8)



What's the future for social housing looking like?

Australia faces a social housing timebomb, with a looming shortfall of almost 200,000 homes by 2031 unless the Federal Government begins investing now. A report released in August 2021 by Compass Housing Services finds state governments have limited capacity to house the people on their respective waiting lists and no capacity to cater for future demand. (9)

"The federal-state blame game is arid and gets us nowhere. A ballooning number of Australians on low and middle incomes simply cannot compete for housing in the booming private sales and rental market. We need a breakthrough in co-operation quickly, otherwise Australia will confront a social catastrophe. State governments simply do not have the fiscal firepower to build enough social housing. Unless the Federal Government steps up, homelessness services and other health and welfare services will be overwhelmed."

Everybody's Home national spokesperson, Kate Colvin (10)

What's the most effective way to reduce homelessness?

Social housing investment is the most effective way to reduce homelessness, due to its affordable rents, security of tenure, and other supports that are not available to people in the private rental market. Financially vulnerable people in social housing are less than half as likely to become homeless as a similar group renting privately. Over 1/3 of new tenants in social housing were previously homeless. (11)

Some 7,000 people were taken off the streets during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Steven Coard was one of them. At nearly 50, he's been sleeping rough for most of his adult life. *"What an amazing transformation — from being at rock bottom, to back on the social ladder," he said. "I thought we were going to be left out here to deal with it ourselves. "All of a sudden, we're all being housed. It's a very mind-blowing experience."* (12)

"It's the right thing to do. It's cheaper to get people a home. It'll save money on police call-outs, and treating people on emergency wards. Homeless is not an identity. It's an experience."

And if we can make it a short experience, and one that doesn't reoccur, we can reduce the human toll and of course, the cost to the taxpayer." (13)

– Launch Housing CEO Bevan Warner.

How do we reduce housing poverty?



**Build more
social housing**

The Community Housing Industry Association, Homelessness Australia, National Shelter, and the national housing campaign, Everybody's Home, have called for a Social Housing Acceleration and Renovation Program (SHARP). (14) This would enable the delivery of at least **30,000 additional social housing units and the renovation many thousands more existing properties to high environmental standards**. SHARP proposes social housing maintenance and upgrading; acquisition of sites and properties requiring renovation/completion which are suitable for social housing; shovel ready development projects and longer term new development projects. They say **3/4 of the 30,000 new homes could be completed within 3 years**. More 6,000 new homes could begin construction within the next 6 months if they are supported by Federal Government investment. (15)



Rents have surged and vacancies have shrunk to record lows

According to [CoreLogic's Rental Review for the June 2022 Quarter](#):

- national rental rates surged by 9.5% over the year;
- capital city rents increased by 9.1%; and
- regional Australia's annual rental growth was 10.8%.

Vacancy rates were at historic lows:

- national vacancy rates 1.2% in June 2022 quarter;
- capital city vacancy rates were 1.3%; and
- regional Australia's vacancy rates were 1%.

There were 1.375 million households receiving inadequate Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) in March 2022 and one third of them (more than 440,000) had children. (16)

Anti-Poverty Week supports the call from ACOSS and Everybody's Home for an immediate 50% increase in CRA to alleviate poverty and risks of homelessness.



**Supporting
renters is also
important**

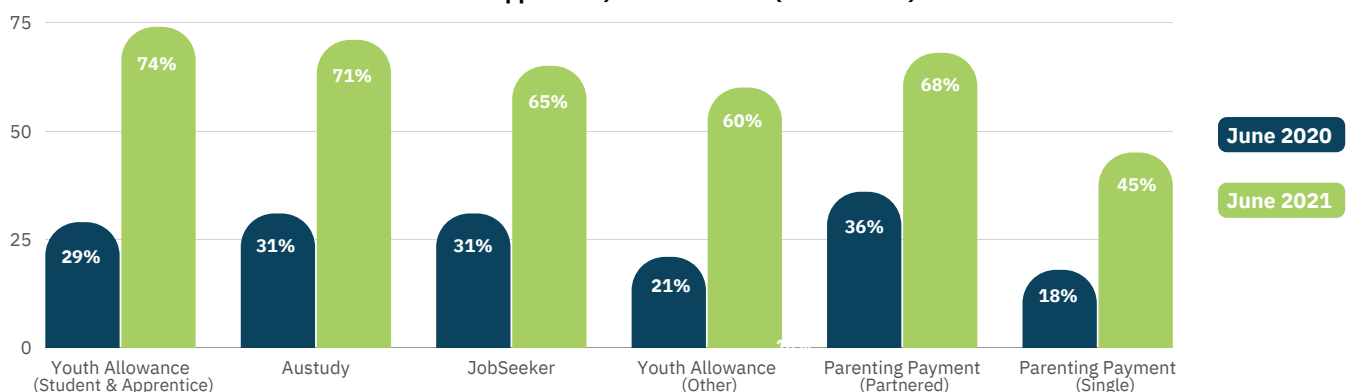
Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) helps people who are renting and rely on the income support system, including low income families. Even the Government's own Treasury concluded in 2020: ***"The maximum value of Commonwealth Rent Assistance has not kept pace with market rents, especially for low-income renters."*** (17)

A 2019 Productivity Commission Report found that over the past 20 years rents have been rising faster than the consumer price index, the rate at which CRA is indexed. CRA has not been increased in real terms since 2000. As a result, between 2001 and 2018, the average share of rents covered by CRA fell from 28% to 24%. (18)

A single parent family with one or two children were paying \$320 per week rent in June 2022 and only receiving ~\$76 per week in Commonwealth Rent Assistance (national median figures) – that is a \$244 a week gap. (19)

The [Anglicare Australia 2022 Rental Availability Snapshot](#) released on 28/4/22, found that "The major drop in rental listings, and the halving of the vacancy rate, means that there is even more pressure on renters on low incomes. They need to find an affordable home in a tight market, while competing with record numbers of people who can no longer afford to buy. This has led to a market that has never been less affordable."

Percentage of Households in Rental Stress by Income Support Payment, June 2020 (with Coronavirus Supplement) and June 2021 (without CVS)



Rental stress is usually defined as when housing costs are more than 30% of the gross household income. Prior to the pandemic, around 40% of Commonwealth Rent Assistance households were living in rental stress.

The full Coronavirus Supplement reduced this to 29% in June 2020, however by June 2021 - when the supplement was removed, and rents kept rising - nearly half (46%) of all households receiving CRA were living in rental stress.

We would expect these levels to be even higher in June 2022 as rents increased nationally by 9.5% in the year, according to [CoreLogic's Rental Review for the June 2022 Quarter](#). (20)

Why are so many low-income people renting in the private market?

More than 2.65 million people, or over 1 million households, rented in the private market in 2018. A rise in housing prices alongside the decline in social housing has led to a large increase in low-income people renting in the private market. (21)



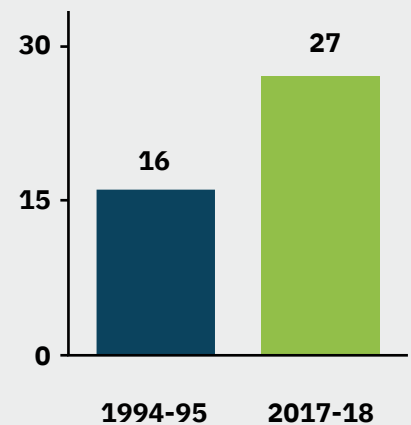
How would building more social housing help our economy?

The federal government could save almost 20,000 jobs a year if it builds more social housing. Constructing 30,000 social and affordable homes over the next 3 years would generate a steady pipeline of jobs for tradies that would otherwise run out of work. There would also be extra work for scaffolders, planners and surveyors. This large 'economic multiplier effect' explains why committing to a pipeline of 30,000 social homes over the next four years would save between 15,540 and 18,050 jobs a year, according to SGS Economics and Planning. (22)

In response to the GFC, the Rudd-Gillard Government introduced a Social Housing Initiative which provided direct funding for the construction of new dwellings, which saw 19,700 new dwellings built and led to the creation of around 9,000 full-time jobs in the construction industry. It also included repairs and refurbishment for up to 60,000 existing social housing dwellings. (23)

Independent analysis by KPMG found that for every \$1 invested, \$1.3 went into the economy. (24) This does not include the savings from crisis accommodation, health and other costs associated with homelessness and housing poverty.

Percentage of low-income Australians renting in private market 1994-95 and 2017-18



Source: Vulnerable Private Renters: Evidence and Options

"The ideal economic recovery options are those that boost jobs now while delivering long-term payoffs. Upgrading low income housing meets that test, with immediate activity in construction, building materials, appliance supply and trades; and decades of better lives, lower bills and a stronger energy system."

- Australian Industry Group Chief Executive Innes Willox (25)

What you can do to help

Anti-Poverty Week is partnering with the **Everybody's Home** campaign to help ensure all Australians have a safe, secure and affordable home. See **Everybody's Home** for more information and to find out how you can get involved.

Produced by Anti-Poverty Week as part of its **Fast Facts** series. Data correct as of 18 August 2022.

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