

Resolution of Council

7 April 2025

Item 12.5

Addressing Poverty and Inequality in the City of Sydney

Moved by Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Ellsmore –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) more than 5 million Australians are barely scraping by on Centrelink payment rates below the poverty line, and millions more are struggling with the cost of living;
- (ii) members of our community receiving this support are forced to make impossible choices between paying rent, purchasing food, or buying essential medicine, while low-income earners are 10 times more likely to have no internet connection at home;
- (iii) income support should provide people with enough to cover basic necessities to live a healthy and dignified life, rather than keeping them in a cycle of financial struggle and survival;
- (iv) economic inequality is a major problem in the City of Sydney, there are persistent gaps between groups in Sydney that enjoy the majority of benefits of the city's growth compared with the groups that do not; and
- (v) Australia's mutual obligations framework forces jobseekers to complete tasks such as applying for jobs or attending training, or have their payments stopped. The scheme is highly controversial and potentially unlawful, with numerous leading advocates and organisations critiquing the system as unfair, ineffective and enormously harmful to people in poverty due to abusive providers;

(B) Council further note that:

- (i) following a Lord Mayoral Minute, at its meeting on 24 June 2019, Council resolved to support the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) campaign to raise the rate of Newstart and Youth Allowance to bring payments above the poverty line;

- (ii) in May 2023, the Lord Mayor wrote to the then-Treasurer in support of ACOSS's raise the rate campaign, calling on the Australian Government to lift JobSeeker, Youth Allowance, Austudy and Abstudy so there is a consistent minimum payment level, and doubling Commonwealth Rent Assistance; and
 - (iii) following this advocacy, in the 2023/24 budget the Australian Government increased the rate of eligible working age and student payments, including JobSeeker, Austudy and Youth Allowance, by about \$40 per fortnight, and increased rent assistance by 15%, but more needs to be done as cost of living pressures increase;
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, and the Minister for Social Services, asking them to commit to raising JobSeeker, Youth Allowance, and related payments to at least \$82 per day, equivalent to the pension rate, to ensure all members of our community experiencing hardship can live with dignity, and urging immediate action to address this critical issue of inequality;
- (D) Council continues to call on the Australian Government to urgently raise Centrelink payment rates above the poverty line, and continues to advocate for this important reform; and
- (E) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to write to the Anti-Poverty Centre, Economic Justice Australia, Yfoundations, Deadly Connections, Unemployed Workers Union and any other relevant organisations in the Local Government Area about what the City is doing to address widening inequality, and about opportunities available through the City's grants program to support those experiencing and at risk of poverty in our communities.

Carried unanimously.

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