

Position Statement



Adequate Income

Anglicare Australia believes that a fair society is one where everyone can live a dignified life and nobody lives in poverty. People are entitled to support while they study for the future, get help while they look for work, or get a pension to support themselves if they have a disability, and be paid fairly for the work they do. We must have adequate incomes to become a fair society.

Our Experience

Each year, the Anglicare Australia Network supports thousands of people who simply don't have enough to survive. Our Network offers financial support services to over 30,000 people and emergency relief to over 60,000 people across every state and territory.

It is our experience that amongst those living with the lowest incomes, there is overrepresentation of single parents, people experiencing homelessness, people who have been without work for a long time, young people, families living with disability or mental illness, care leavers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and those on bridging visas (particularly those without work rights) living in our communities.

Key Issues

A decent, secure income is crucial to our wellbeing. Income guarantees stability and helps people plan their lives. It's the anchor that allows people to look after themselves, care for their families, and to make decisions for their future like starting a business, pursuing a passion, or starting a family. Without a good income, people can lose control over their own lives.

Those who don't have a decent income find it harder to get work, stay in education, and build connections with their communities. Many people find it difficult to eat well, with food being one of the easiest essential costs to cut when juggling bills, rent, and transport.¹

And people who live in poverty are much more likely to retire into poverty – a time of life when security and comfort is more important than ever. In older age poverty severely impacts health and wellbeing, often leading to earlier transition to residential care.

Many people hope to get an income by finding work. But Anglicare Australia's Jobs Availability Snapshot shows that there simply aren't enough jobs for those who need them.² This is because entry-level jobs are disappearing, and people who face barriers to work are left out of employment strategies. Work is also becoming more insecure and casual, with around one in four people thought to be working casually.³

Inequality is now the worst it has been in seventy-five years, in spite of two decades of uninterrupted economic growth.⁴ But instead of strengthening the safety net and improving support to those who need it the most, recent Budgets have focused on measures that drive increasing inequality and disadvantage in Australia, in turn creating further poverty.

What we know from the experiences of people who need support and our work is that government payments – Newstart, Austudy, the Disability Support, and Aged Pensions – are no longer a safety net. They are poverty traps that are leaving pockets so bare that people can't afford to fill a prescription, buy decent food, or even cover the cost of rent.⁵

The minimum wage is also failing to meet the needs of many people. 2.5 million Australians are paid at the national minimum wage⁶ and many are experiencing hardship. A third of people living below the poverty line are in work.⁷ And the vast majority of rentals are unaffordable for people living on the minimum wage.⁸

Our research shows that Australians do not believe it should be this way. The vast majority of people surveyed by Anglicare Australia want to live in a country that takes care of those in need, and do not want people on income support to live in poverty.⁹

To become the society that Australians expect, we need to take real action on poverty by making sure everyone has a fair and decent income.

Recommended Actions

Anglicare Australia calls for:

- An increase in Newstart and other government payments to make sure people who need help are not living in poverty
- An independent commission that sets the rates of government payments independently of government
- Legislated minimum wage increases to make sure that wages can keep up with the rising cost of living
- A tax and transfer system that encourages people to move into work instead of penalising them
- A fairer tax system that supports people in need and encourages work – rather than a system that rewards people simply for being wealthy.

1 Anglicare Australia (2012) When there is not enough to eat: A national study of food insecurity among Emergency Relief clients. State of the Family report.

2 See Anglicare Australia Jobs Availability Snapshots for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018

3 Carney, T., and Stanford, J. (2018) The Dimensions of Insecure Work: A Factbook.

4 Sheil, C., and Stilwell, F. (2016) The wealth of the nation: Current data on the distribution of wealth in Australia.

5 NATSEM (2012) Going Without: Financial hardship in Australia. Commissioned by Anglicare Australia, Catholic Social Services, the Salvation Army and UnitingCare Australia.

6 See Fair Work Commission, Annual Wage Review 2017-2018

7 Australian Council of Social Service (2016) Poverty in Australia.

8 Anglicare Australia (2018) Rental Affordability Snapshot.

9 Anglicare Australia (2018) The real story: What Australians think about poverty and how we shape the debate. State of the Family report.