

18 February 2021

The Hon. Scott Morrison, MP
Prime Minister of Australia

Dear Prime Minister,

Protecting Australia's children from poverty

I am writing to you on behalf of 32 child and family service sector organisations delivering services to children and families experiencing hardship and vulnerability in Victoria.

We, the under-signed organisations, write to call on you to permanently raise the rate of social security payments to a level above the poverty line.

Before the pandemic, an estimated 774,000 children under 15 years of age were living in poverty and around 19,400 children aged 0-14 were homeless.

When the pandemic hit, the Australian Government took swift action and lifted the incomes of people receiving many social security payments above the poverty line through the provision of a \$550 Coronavirus Supplement.

This had a profoundly positive impact on the lives of people who experienced significant hardship for years. Families could put food on the table, buy essential clothes and school supplies for children, and pursue employment and other productive activities previously out of reach in the face of a constant struggle to survive.

The effective doubling of payments was an incredible act of poverty alleviation, and yet has already been wound back to a level that no longer provides adequate support.

We know that poverty can affect a developing child's emotional regulation, memory and executive function with potential long-term consequences for their future. It presents a range of risks to children such as food insecurity, insecure or unsuitable housing, limited opportunities, and social exclusion. These risk factors can lead to poorer physical health, mental health, academic achievement, and overall wellbeing.

Inadequate payments also increase the pressure on state-funded child and family services to meet the material needs of families, diverting them from the use of their specialist skills to support healthy family functioning.

Every day, we are seeing more people and organisations express their support for an increase to the social security payments that families rely on. We know that the level of these payments and the conditions attached to them are trapping families and children in poverty, and we know we can do better as a country.

We call on you to deliver a permanent, adequate increase to social security payments to a level above the poverty line to ensure families have what they need to provide for their children.

Your faithfully,



Deb Tsorbaris, CEO, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

cfecfw.asn.au

@CFECFW

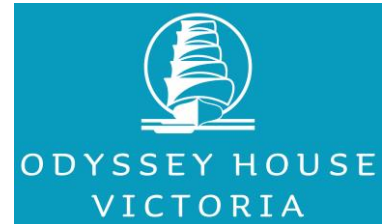
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Signatories



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Children,
Young People,
Families &
Their Future.





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**Permanent
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