

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

from Centrelink staff

We know that 2020 has been an incredibly hard year for you. We see and hear your fear and anxiety when we talk to you. The queues outside our offices have been visible signs of the chaos that COVID-19 has brought to you and to our community.

So much of our lives have been thrown into disarray. So many people have lost their jobs. So much of what we do each day has been made harder through rules and restrictions.

When times are tough, our job is to be there for you. Centrelink is the community's safety net. It's meant to be a source of support when you have none. We work, day in, day out to help people who are facing the effects of this disaster.

There are three things that we are really concerned about.

1. The federal government is reducing JobSeeker payment by \$300 a fortnight by removing the COVID supplement. This change not only reduces Jobseeker but subsequently also cuts back other supporting payments of Youth Allowance and Parenting Payment. Right now, massive reductions in payments with changes to make it harder to access them are the last things you need.
2. We are also worried about our ability to help you. Our permanent workforce has been cut significantly over the last ten years and this has led to long wait times for claims to be processed or calls to be answered. Right now, we need more well-trained permanent staff employed in Centrelink to do the very important work of supporting our community.
3. We believe that public services should remain in public hands - not privatised and outsourced to companies some of whom barely even pay tax here, where profit is prioritised over service, and workers are in low paid and insecure work. A highly skilled, appropriately staffed public service benefits our community and our economy.

We know that Centrelink is an important part of Australia's recovery from COVID-19. We know that maintaining the current rate of JobSeeker and making sure that there are enough staff across Services Australia, are vital in getting our community through this crisis.

Yours sincerely,

Services Australia staff (Centrelink, Medicare, and Child Support), and
The Community and Public Sector Union



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