

Wednesday 28 July 2021

Morrison Government finally increases support payment, but fails to protect jobs with JobKeeper

The Morrison Government has finally relented to pressure on increasing the amount of the COVID-19 disaster payment to a maximum of \$750 per week, more than a month into the Sydney lockdown.

Workers in NSW have already endured over a month in lockdown, with inadequate payments that were simply not enough to make it through lockdown. Vast numbers of workers have already been stood down from their jobs or lost vital shifts and hours. Workers in Victoria and South Australia were also left without adequate support.

The Morrison Government continues to rule out implementing a JobKeeper 2 wage subsidy scheme for Australian workers, despite paying the same rates through the disaster payment scheme. JobKeeper would provide more security for working people by putting money directly in their hands through the payroll system and maintaining the vital connection to employment. Workers deserve security and certainty during these difficult times.

The changes to JobSeeker do nothing to assist unemployed workers who lost their jobs before the lockdown. The JobSeeker rate should be raised to \$600 for everyone who is eligible.

The Morrison and NSW Governments' announcement to expand financial assistance for businesses will also do nothing to assist workers who have struggled through weeks of uncertainty and low payments.

The expansion means that eligible businesses with an annual turnover of up to \$250 million will receive financial support, without any legal guarantees that will keep workers in jobs and protect them from having their shifts and hours cut back or being stood down entirely.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil,

“The Morrison Government has been dragged kicking and screaming into increasing the money provided through disaster payments. For many workers living in NSW who lost their livelihoods more than a month ago, it's come far too late. It's also too late for workers in Victoria and South Australia affected by earlier lockdowns.

“We welcome the Morrison Government finally lifting the rates of support – but JobKeeper saved jobs and provided the security of knowing that you had a job to return to. Workers in NSW, and workers who will be affected by ongoing lockdowns, need that security.

“The JobSeeker payment should be increased to \$600 per week for anyone who is eligible, instead of just those who've lost more than 8 hours of work per week.

“Our most populous state is facing at least another month of lockdown, with the possibility of an extension. This is an incredibly difficult time for people in NSW, and they need the security of knowing that they will have a job to return to when this lockdown is over.

“Bringing in JobKeeper 2 which covers all workers is not just essential to help workers survive this and future lockdowns – it is also necessary to put money in the hands of working Australians, so that they can spend and we can rebuild our economy once the lockdowns end.”

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