

16 September 2020

The Hon. Scott Morrison, MP  
Prime Minister of Australia

Email: [Scott.Morrison.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Scott.Morrison.MP@aph.gov.au)

Cc:

The Hon. Josh Frydenberg, Treasurer  
Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston, Minister for Families and Social Services  
The Hon. Greg Hunt, Minister for Health

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to urge your Government to commit to:

- raising the rate of JobSeeker Payment,
- reversing the cut to the rate of the Coronavirus Supplement from 24 September 2020, and
- extending income support to international students, temporary migrants, asylum seekers and others who have been denied a source of income during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Coronavirus Supplement has transformed the lives of the Australians who have been locked out of employment both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has dramatically improved the health and wellbeing of some of the poorest Australian families. I strongly encourage you to look at the heartfelt accounts at [550 Reasons to Smile](#), which documents the difference the Coronavirus Supplement has made to people's lives.

cohealth is one of Victoria's largest community health services, providing a wide range of medical, dental, allied health and social support services to people in Melbourne. Many of the people we see experience disadvantage, have complex health conditions and are trying to survive on the JobSeeker Payment.

As a health organisation cohealth sees every day how low income can cause ill health and can exacerbate existing health conditions. We have seen the difference being able to afford a place to live, three nutritious meals a day and to pay for vital medications has made.

We are deeply concerned that these advances will be reversed, and the health and wellbeing of people jeopardised, when the Coronavirus Supplement is reduced in September, and then removed on 31 December 2020. With restrictions still in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 in Victoria individuals and families will be faced with a significant drop in income at a time when employment opportunities are simply not

available. For a nation whose wellbeing is already suffering due to the pandemic, to reduce support to the most vulnerable at this time cannot be justified.

At the same time, too many people are excluded from any form of income support due to their visa category. cohealth and many other community agencies support them as best we can, but this is not sustainable. While employment is so constrained it is critical that some form of income support be provided to this group.

I urge you to use the upcoming budget to deliver a permanent increase to the JobSeeker Payment that is adequate to ensure people can meet their fundamental needs. This will support the health and wellbeing of individuals and families, and will be immediately spent, directly contributing to the economic stimulus the nation needs to recover from the pandemic.

I would welcome the opportunity to explain more about our rationale for improving the health and wellbeing of Australians by increasing the level of JobSeeker Payment and can be contacted on [Nicole.Bartholomeusz@cohealth.org.au](mailto:Nicole.Bartholomeusz@cohealth.org.au).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N. Bartholomeusz', enclosed within a large, loopy oval scribble.

Nicole Bartholomeusz  
Chief Executive