

NTCOSS

Northern Territory Council of Social Service



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Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs

Via email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

30 June 2023

To the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs,

Re: Inquiry into Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Safety Net) Bill 2023

The Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry to Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management Reform) Bill 2023.

NTCOSS is the peak body for the Northern Territory (NT) community and social services sector and advocates for people affected by social and economic disadvantage and inequality. NTCOSS membership is made up of community managed, non-government, not for profit organisations, which work in social and community service delivery, sector development and advocacy. NTCOSS' vision is a fair, inclusive, and sustainable NT.

While NTCOSS supports an increase to the base rate of working age payments, \$20 a week is insufficient to address the significant cost of living pressures being faced by people on income support. This will still leave more than 20,000 Territorians who rely on these payments unable to cover basic costs. Similarly, while the first real increase to rent assistance in over 30 years is to be commended, the 15% rise will leave people in housing stress because these payments have fallen so far behind basic costs.

Remote and regional areas across the Territory face greater cost of living pressures than other regions. The NTCOSS Cost of Living Fact Sheets¹ highlight cost of living pressures in a range of areas; food, transport, housing and utilities, as well as a number of related recommendations. NTCOSS has long advocated for adequate income support payments to provide an effective safety net for those who need it.²

NTCOSS endorses submissions from Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and the Raise the Rate Campaign, and **recommends passing the current Strengthening the Safety Net Bill 2023 without delay or amendment. NTCOSS further urges the government to work towards an additional increase to at least \$76 a day, in line with the Age Pension.**

¹ See [Cost of Living Reports - NTCOSS - Northern Territory Council of Social Service](#)

² See previous submissions including; NTCOSS (2023) Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the extent and nature of poverty in Australia; NTCOSS(2019) Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Adequacy of Newstart and Related Payments and Alternative Mechanisms to Determine the Level of Income Support Payments in Australia (public);

Please contact Mollie Harding, Senior Policy Officer with NTCOSS, with any queries relating to this submission at mollie@ntcoss.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Stephanie Kelly

CEO