

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Federal Budget 2019: 350,000 older job seekers still left in poverty

The Federal Budget again leaves almost 350,000 job seekers older than 45 years out in the cold by failing to increase Newstart payments and excluding job seekers from the energy rebate, Australia's leading seniors' advocacy organisation, COTA Australia, said today.

COTA CEO Ian Yates called on the Government to increase the Newstart by \$75 a week and make sure all Newstart recipients can access the Government's Energy Supplement the same as people receiving the Aged Pension.

Mr Yates said there are 183,000 people older than 50 on Newstart who have been on Newstart for longer than 12 months. Research shows if you're unemployed longer than 12 months after age 50, you might not ever return to the workforce, in a large part because of ageist attitudes of employers.

"There are more unemployed workers between 55 and 64 than any other group of Australians and they receive Newstart income support payments longer than any other group as well," Mr Yates said.

"Older workers face chronic age discrimination in the our workforce, which means finding work after 50 far more difficult, particularly in industries where workforce needs have changed over the decades.

"\$40 a day – or \$15,000 a year - is just not enough to survive on while people are actively seeking to return to the workforce. If people don't have enough to cover the basics, people will be dealing with financial stress rather than working to build a future.

COTA's recent survey 'State of the (Older) Nation' showed that Australians who were unemployed and renting between the age of 50 and 64 were facing the greatest level of financial stress, with 1 in 4 identifying energy bills as overdue because difficulties paying on time.

"At the same time losing a job often after nearly a lifetime of work, does mean the loss of savings and assets that may otherwise provide some financial protection in retirement.

"The inadequacy of Newstart contributes to undermining Australia's retirement system and setting older workers up for poverty in retirement. We need to review the assets test for Newstart for people over the age of 50, as well as the rate "

Mr Yates said it was inexplicable that Newstart recipients are not eligible to receive the \$75 one off Energy Supplement announced in tonight's Budget.

"Surviving on Newstart and looking for work after a lifetime of employment is soul destroying enough. Being told you aren't eligible for the same help with bills as others receiving income support is outrageous and must be remedied immediately," Mr Yates said.

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