

The Coalition's Response to Economic Justice Australia

2025 Federal Election Questionnaire

The Treating Families Fairly Report found the Covid-19 Supplement of \$550 per f/n was used for meeting basic needs, paying off household debt, and other strategic expenditures to improve long-term financial security. Do you agree a permanent increase in social security payments and pensions is necessary and would benefit social security recipients, and Australian society more broadly? If so, by how much?

Few countries provide the strong safety net available to Australians.

Every dollar spent is a dollar that someone else earned, so it is incumbent upon us that spending on our social security safety net is sustainable in the future.

We have to make sure our welfare system is fair to the taxpayers who pay for it. It is funded by taxpayers and needs to be managed responsibly. This responsibility extends to future generations who will have to meet the cost of the social security system in the decades to come.

On top of cash payments, our social security system also includes employment services, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme concessions and health care cards.

Housing assistance is crucial to improving affordability for renters on the lowest incomes. Do you agree the Federal Government should raise the rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance as a key approach to improving housing affordability?

Commonwealth Rent Assistance has increased over the last three years with Coalition support.

When it comes to increasing housing supply, Labor has waved the white flag.

Labor's promise to build 1.2 million homes over five years will never see the light of day, with industry experts predicting a shortfall of at least 400,000 homes. And despite promising \$33 billion in housing investment, not a single additional new home has been built under a Labor housing policy

Over the past three years under Anthony Albanese, we have seen median rents skyrocket by 18 per cent and a family with a typical mortgage is \$50,000 worse under Labor.

Labor has run the biggest migration program in a generation with more than one million migrants entering Australia since coming to Government, while fewer homes are being built.

Services Australia needs to be properly resourced and have sufficient well-trained staff to correctly answer people's questions and provide support when needed, and to process claims lawfully and efficiently. Do you agree this is better achieved by the public service, or through private companies or labour-hire?

The Coalition strongly supports an efficient and effective Services Australia, which can quickly and accurately process social security claims.

Under the Albanese Labor Government, Services Australia's claims processing times have blown out dramatically, leaving Australians waiting months to have claims processed for Age Pensions, Disability Support Pensions, AusStudy and Seniors Health Cards.

Wherever Services Australia uses an automated process, there should be clear human oversight and processes to prevent errors or failures.

Following unprecedented claim delays and call wait times, in November 2023, the Federal Government committed \$228m for an additional 3000 staff to speed up claim payments and reduce call wait times. Do you agree with this expenditure? Do you believe these 3000 extra positions should be retained on a permanent basis?

The Coalition strongly supports an efficient and effective Services Australia which can quickly and accurately process social security claims.

Under the Albanese Labor Government, Services Australia's claims processing times have blown out dramatically, leaving Australians waiting months to have claims processed for Age Pensions, Disability Support Pensions, AusStudy and Seniors Health Cards.

In the 2025-26 Budget, Labor cut 600 jobs from Services Australia.

The Minister for Government Services and Minister for Finance, Senator Katy Gallagher, has stated that the work of these staff is "complete", and the Budget papers show that the Albanese Government is ending funding for thousands of further positions at the end of 2025-26.

Mutual obligation requirements are tasks and activities that a person on JobSeeker payment is required to do to receive their payment. If people don't meet their mutual obligation requirements their payments may be suspended or cancelled. EJA believes this system should be abolished. It has been administered unfairly, and sometimes unlawfully.

This has resulted in significant harm, particularly when people's payments have been cancelled or suspended, their mutual obligations are too onerous or unsuitable as they only have a partial capacity to work, and when requirements have interfered with people's ability to search for work and participate in education and training. Do you believe that mutual obligation requirements should continue?

The Coalition believes in mutual obligations. If you are receiving assistance from the taxpayer you should be looking for work or preparing for work.

We want to prepare people – especially young people – to become work ready and get into jobs and stay connected to the workforce. Australians do not believe in no strings attached welfare. Living on welfare should not be a lifestyle choice.

If you answered yes or maybe to the previous question, would you be willing to make them without financial penalty e.g. payment suspensions and cancellations?

The Coalition remains committed to the Targeted Compliance Framework to ensure all job seekers are meeting their mutual obligations requirements.

We note that there are many protections in place before any penalties are applied under the Targeted Compliance Framework.

If you would consider an alternative model, what would that look like?

As above.

Some of the Robodebt Royal Commission recommendations requiring legislative reform have not been implemented. Will you make this legislative reform a priority, particularly placing a time limit on debt recovery and regulating the use of automation to ensure a crisis on the scale of Robodebt never happens again?

The Coalition takes the complex issues raised in the Royal Commission's report seriously.

It is important that all parties learn from the Report and that its recommendations are sensibly considered.

The Robodebt scandal and subsequent Royal Commission demonstrated that a robust legal safety net is a crucial part of a well-functioning social security system. Recommendation 12.4 highlighted the importance of adequately funding social security legal services. It has been estimated that to adequately fund community legal centres specialising in social security law would require an extra \$5 million per year of funding to these services to provide legal service to all Australians wherever they live. Do you agree this funding is important? Will you publicly commit to this funding?

The Commonwealth provides funding to Community Legal Centres through the National Legal Assistance Partnership, which is then administered by the states and territories.

An elected Coalition Government will continue providing funding through this partnership and work with the states and territories to ensure that this funding is directed to the areas where it is needed most.

Remote Area Allowance, a payment to social security recipients who live in remote areas, has not increased in 20 years. It is currently an extra \$9.10 per week. Given living costs have risen more in remote towns than in metropolitan areas, do you agree it is time to increase and index this allowance?

Few countries provide the strong safety net available to Australians.

In addition to base rates of income support payment, there are more than 20 supplementary payments available to income support recipients, depending on their circumstances and additional needs.

Every dollar spent is a dollar that someone else earned, so it is incumbent upon us that spending on our social security safety net is sustainable in the future. We have to make sure our welfare system is fair to the taxpayers who pay for it. It is funded by taxpayers and needs to be managed responsibly.

This responsibility extends to future generations who will have to meet the cost of the social security system in the decades to come.

Will you publicly commit to increasing Remote Area Allowance as a priority?

Few countries provide the strong safety net available to Australians.

The Coalition believes that it is the government's role to manage the budget in a prudent and responsible way, to alleviate household cost pressures and restore our standard of living so Australians can get ahead in life.

We believe that a strong economy is the key to helping Australians fulfil their aspirations and ensure they can cover the basics in the household budget.

That is why the Coalition's key focus is creating jobs and getting people back into work, because we know that getting a job is the best way to improve the living standards of people and their families.

The Remote Area Allowance is a supplementary payment for people receiving income support. Every dollar spent is a dollar that someone earned, so it is incumbent upon us that spending on our social security safety net is sustainable into the future.

Australia has a comprehensive income support system. In addition to base rates of payment there are more than 20 supplementary payments available to income support recipients (including the Remote Area Allowance), depending on their circumstances and additional needs.

On top of cash payments, our social security system also includes employment services, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme concessions and health care cards.

We have to make sure our welfare system is fair to the taxpayers who pay for it. It is funded by taxpayers and therefore needs to be managed responsibly. This responsibility extends to future generations who will have to meet the cost of the social security system in the decades to come.

An elected Dutton Coalition Government will ensure the welfare system is fit for purpose and provides a safety net for those Australians most in need.

People with significant disability and little or no work capacity are excluded from DSP as a result of the Program of Support requirement. They are effectively consigned to serve an 18-month waiting period with mutual obligation requirements while on JobSeeker Payment. A full EJA brief on this can be found here. Do you support permanently abolishing the Program of Support?

Program of Support introduced in 2011 is an eligibility requirement for Disability Support Pension. The Disability Support Pension is long term income support paid at the highest rate in the social security system.

The DSP is intended for individuals with permanent physical, intellectual and/or psychiatric impairments that prevent them from working. Prior to receiving a lifelong pension, an individual's impairment (or impairments) must be fully diagnosed, treated and stabilised. This ensures that the granting of the payment reflects their circumstances - a permanent inability to work.

The current cost of doctors' reports, particularly specialist reports required for Disability Support Pension (DSP) applications, are costly and create a barrier for those needing those reports to access their social security entitlements. Do you agree to introducing a Medicare item number for required medical reports to make applying for a DSP less expensive?

The Coalition has committed \$9.4 billion to improve access to primary care and mental health and fix Labor's Healthcare crisis. We also welcome the Government's decision to finally listen to our calls to address the health workforce crisis with a comprehensive package of training measures.