



Embargoed until 1am Tuesday 27 June 2017

NTCOSS Report Renews Calls for Broadening of Concession Eligibility and Increase to Newstart and Youth Allowance

The 16th Cost of Living Report released today by the Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) provides a general CPI update and highlights areas of financial pressure that many NT families continue to face.

The Report reveals that petrol costs (+14.2%), vegetable (+12.1%), fruit (+10.7%), and medical and hospital costs (+5.9%) have all risen over the past year. There has been a slight increase in the generic CPI for Darwin (+0.5%), in contrast to the increase in the national CPI (+2.1%) over the past year.

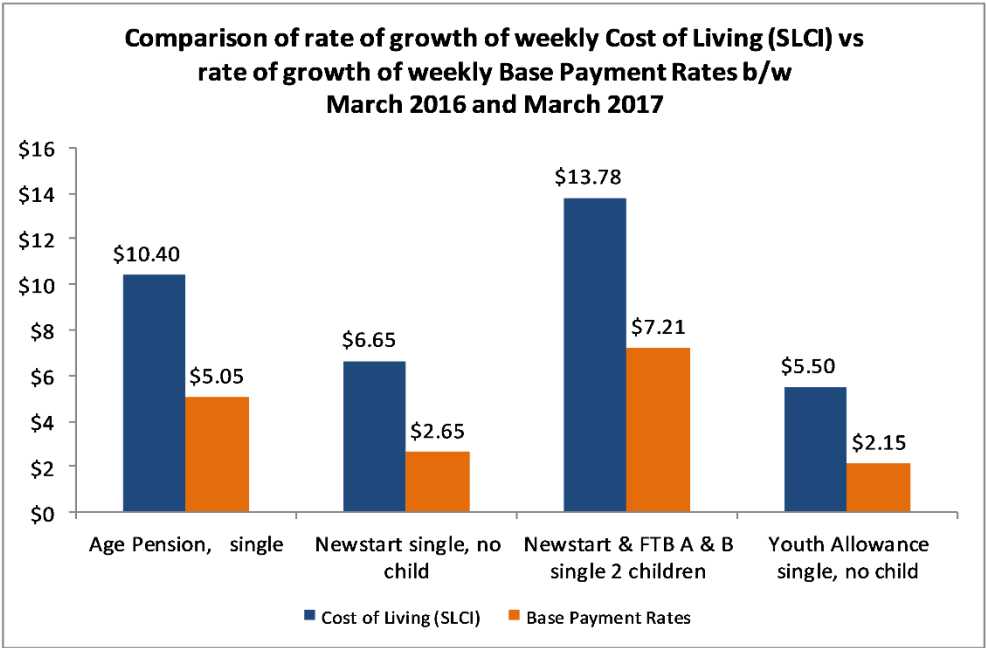
Jonathan Pilbrow, NTCOSS Policy Advisor said,

“A low generic CPI for Darwin doesn’t necessarily lead to low prices for all of the goods and services that households require - it simply reflects that there have been price rises in some areas and decreases in other

“In addition, the challenge to address high food and fuel prices in remote areas still remains – yet this is not reflected in Darwin CPI figures

“High costs in critical expenditure areas continue to place great strain on lower income households across the NT. These items represent a greater proportion of weekly income for these households”.

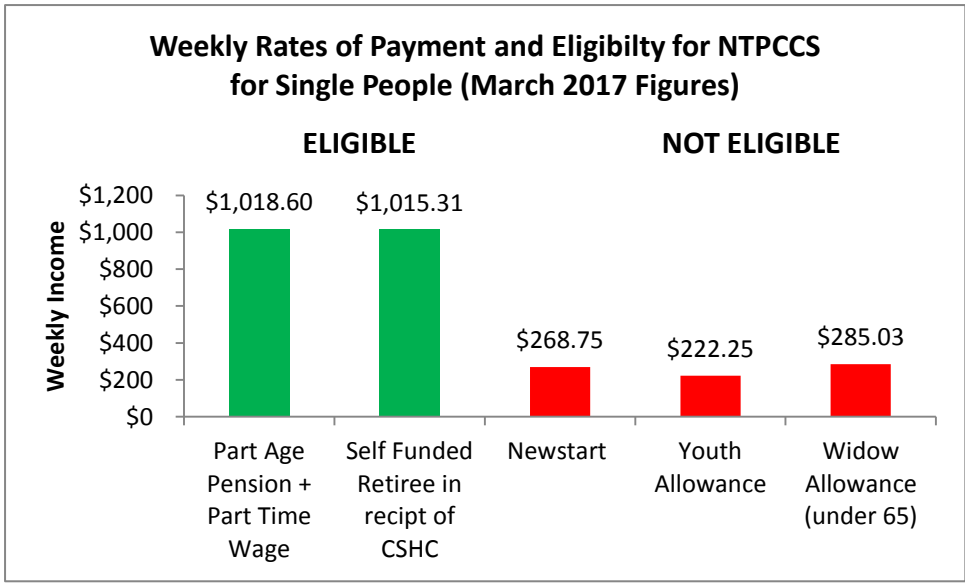
The NTCOSS Report also reveals that the increase in the cost of living has outstripped the increase in Centrelink payment rates over the past year.



This is of particular concern for Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients, who receive a payment well below the pension rate (with Newstart almost \$170 per week lower), and whose payments have a less generous indexation system.

NTCOSS, along with the Councils of Social Service across Australia, continues to call on the Federal Government to raise the Newstart rate by at least \$50 per week. This rise would work towards easing cost of living pressures on many people.

The NTCOSS report also shows that on top of the low base payments, Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients who live in the Northern Territory face additional disadvantage by being ineligible for concessions, such as those for electricity, which exist to help ease cost of living pressures for those Territorians eligible for the Northern Territory the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme (NTPCCS).



The lack of access to concessions for people on these payment types is in direct contrast to the concession schemes that operate in all other states and territories, where electricity concessions, for example, are available to all health care card holders, and some states also provide motor vehicle registration concessions to all health care card holders.

Mr Pilbrow said,

‘It is a concern that in the Northern Territory the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme (NTPCCS) does not include people on the lowest incomes in our society’.

Since 2009 NTCOSS has called for an expansion of the eligibility criteria of the NTPCCS Concessions to ensure that those who are most disadvantaged are able to access them.

NTCOSS reiterates this call and looks forward to working with the Northern Territory Government to determine actions to address these issues

Read the 16th NTCOSS Cost of Living Report

For media comment/more information:

Jonathan Pilbrow, NTCOSS Policy Adviser 0403 611 815