

POVERTY IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

THE FACTS



The Northern Territory has the deepest rates of poverty in Australia.

The deepest poverty levels in Australia are found in the NT, where nearly 45 per cent of all Aboriginal households are living below the poverty line.¹ The greatest disparity between Indigenous and other households (nearly 35 per cent) is also found in the NT.

Income inequality in the Northern Territory is deepening.

When income levels are adjusted for inflation² between 2011 and 2016, the situation in the NT has deteriorated: the median personal income for Indigenous individuals declined from \$296 to \$281 per week, while for other individuals that figure increased from \$1018 to \$1072.³

People on low incomes and in remote communities are struggling to meet their basic needs for housing, food and energy.

The Northern Territory has the highest rate of people experiencing homelessness in Australia: 12 times the national average rate of homelessness.⁴

Food security is also an increasing concern, with people in remote communities facing excessive costs for healthy food: in 2019, the same basket of healthy food on average costs \$319 or 60 per cent more in a remote community store than a major supermarket – this gap has widened from 22 per cent in 2012.⁵

Energy poverty is also an increasing concern in the Territory as people on low incomes struggle to afford the shift to energy efficient appliances and home upgrades to reduce their power bills.

The cost of living is going up for those who can least afford it.⁶

¹Land Rights News – Northern Edition in School of Regulation and Global Governance, 2017, 'Deepening Indigenous poverty in the Northern Territory', Australian National University (online)

²10 per cent.

³Land Rights News – Northern Edition in School of Regulation and Global Governance, 2017, 'Deepening Indigenous poverty in the Northern Territory', Australian National University (online)

⁴Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016 (online)

⁵NTCOSS Cost of Living Report 2019 (online)

⁶Ibid.

WHAT WE CAN DO



1. Raise the Rate of Newstart and other income support allowances

ACTION: Call on the Federal Government to Raise the Rate of Newstart (along with Youth Allowance and other related payments) by a minimum of \$75 per week and index allowances to wage growth.

2. Reform employment services to provide more help and less hassle for people looking for work

ACTION: Call on Federal Government to improve employment services to help people find work, by:

Replacing the compliance-focused JobActive model with a fairer model of employment services that gives people the time and support they need to find meaningful work.

Replacing the Community Development Program with a model in line with that proposed by the Fair Work Strong Communities Alliance that creates more jobs in remote communities, reduces poverty, and empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make decisions for their own communities.

3. Ease cost of living pressures and help people meet their basic needs for housing, food and energy

ACTION: Call on the Federal Government and Northern Territory Government to;

That the Federal Government:

- Commit to a fairer deal for the Northern Territory by providing additional funding for Specialist Homelessness Services, based on need not population size.

The Northern Territory Government:

- Implement Housing for Health initiatives across the Northern Territory as a matter of priority.
- Release its plan to increase the supply of social and affordable housing in the Northern Territory.
- Increase household access to energy efficient appliances and renewable energy (including solar).
- Ensure people who meet eligibility criteria are registered for the NT Concession Scheme and extending the NT Concession Scheme to all recipients of Centrelink Health Care Cards (including Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients), prioritising recipients in remote communities.