



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON COST OF LIVING PRESSURES IN THE ACT
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Cost of Living Pressures in the ACT

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To the ACT Legislative Assembly

We are an organised movement of young people across the country called Tomorrow Movement. Today we are addressing you as locals of Canberra and community members currently struggling with the many pressures of working class life in this city. Nationally there is a lot of discussion about cost of living pressures. Many disagreements and differing interpretations for the causes go on day and night in the media and political sphere. We can have different interpretations for why “inflation” and other pressures are happening at this moment. The war in Ukraine, supply chain issues, corporate price gouging, and an apathetic federal government are all reasonable assumptions to make, but regardless of the origin of this issue, the cost of living, specifically here in the ACT, is fermenting a crisis for young people.

The situation is untenable. Rent is increasing while wages stay stagnant. In the case of people under 35, who are the main stakeholders in the demands of Tomorrow Movement, our wages have decreased. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare says that between 2008 and 2018 disposable income declined by 1.6% per year among those aged 15-24. How are we expected to pay rent to the landlord class when our wages are declining and their rental expectations are rising?

This isn't even considering the rising costs for household necessities, food, electricity, water, and gas. When you consider exorbitant public transport fees, the cost of university education, the inadequate mental health care system and the bureaucratic nightmare that is Centrelink, the NDIS and other government “support systems”, more young people are dying from preventable illnesses, resorting to illegal activity and dropping out of this economic arrangement all together and relying on family to support them

Some of these problems can not be fully addressed by state or territory governments. They will require unprecedented community organising, support from the federal government and major investment. But we as young people are

sick and tired of the fallacious narrative that the continuously tightening expectations for living in Australia is a natural law of the market, or an unavoidable feature of our so-called democratic capitalist society.

This is what can be done:

- *Free public transport for all*
- *Making Canberra Institute of Technology completely free to study with, especially courses that provide vital training for people in the fight against climate change and ecological breakdown*
- *Providing more funding to food banks and organizations aimed at feeding hungry people*
- *Government support for acquiring sanitary products and feminine health products*
- *Dedicating money and resources to improving the healthcare system in Canberra and providing more mental health services to people that need them*
- *Rent freeze*
- *More social housing investment*
- *More drug testing facilities*
- *More rehabilitation and drug addiction support service funding*

This is what eventually needs to be done:

- *A climate jobs guarantee is fundamental to enriching and maintaining the lives of everyone on this continent, it involves:*
- *1. Good jobs for everyone who wants one*
- *2. Urgent, coordinated action to solve the climate crisis*
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3. Meaningful work that cares for our communities as decided by our communities

- **4. Public service jobs in the hands of the public**
- **5. A living income for all, whether they work or not**
- **Government recognition of the institutional racism that exists in many government sectors, including implementing the recommendations of every royal commission into Aboriginal issues. Whether it be from deaths in custody, at the hand of police, hate violence or the healthcare system, Indigenous people in this country are still being tortured, tormented and ignored in the political system.**
- **Free accessible community spaces that are open to anyone**
- **Four day work week**

Tomorrow movement have a song, that has been sung in the lobby of the federal Parliament, and sung in many other times, places and contexts. It goes:

History will remember
Remember you
History will remember
Remember you
Which side are you on?
Which side are you on?
Will you stand with us or the wealthy few?

It's time for the ACT Legislative Assembly to decide which side they are on. Will you work, day and night, to fix the worsening problems affecting all working class people, not just young people, or will you continue to act as if these trends are unavoidable laws of the market, allowing corporations to profit off the precarity and desperations of the many. There seems to be a toxic political position in "Australia", which is the idea that inaction is somehow pragmatism. But this is a lie. Inaction is a choice. It is an apathetic and violent choice sometimes. If the ACT Legislative Assembly does not see homelessness, mental illness and economic precarity in Canberra as the travesty it is, and claims to be powerless to stop more people falling into these economic cul-de-sacs, then it is supporting these social problems. Government action is difficult, complex and necessary. Inaction is active disregard for the people you represent.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (n.d.). *Australia's youth: Income: household and individual*. [online] Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/income-household-and-individual#:~:text=Between%202008%20and%202018%20disposable> [Accessed 15 Mar. 2023].