

2021

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**RESPONSE TO THE ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 7 OCTOBER 2021 – COVID-19 SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

**Presented by
EMMA DAVISON MLA
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR SENIORS, VETERANS, FAMILIIES AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
NOVEMBER 2021**



Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister
Treasurer
Minister for Climate Action
Minister for Economic Development
Minister for Tourism

Member for Kurrajong

The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Leader of the Australian Labor Party
PO Box 6022
CANBERRA ACT 2600
A.Albanese.MP@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Albanese

I am writing on behalf of the ACT Government and in accordance with a Motion passed by the Legislative Assembly, to note Members' support for an increase to all income support payments to raise them above the Henderson Poverty Line.

I am also writing to record our opposition to the Federal Liberal-National Coalition Government's decision to cease the COVID-19 Disaster Payment. I note that as the Federal Leader of the Australian Labor Party, you have also raised serious concerns on these important issues.


Attached for your consideration is the ACT Legislative Assembly resolution, reflecting the Assembly's commitment to this position.


The social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are having disproportionate impacts across the community and have particularly affected groups already experiencing disadvantage. These impacts are likely to last for many years, entrenching existing inequality through wage scarring, underemployment, unemployment, and reduced economic prospects.


We note in particular the cessation of the increased JobKeeper payments and the COVID-19 Supplement in April 2021, which had previously kept hundreds of thousands of Australians out of poverty during the first wave of the pandemic in 2020.


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The further announcement on 28 September 2021 of the Federal Government's COVID-19 Disaster Payment ceasing two weeks after a state or territory reaches 80 per cent of adults over 16 fully vaccinated, was met with anxiety across the community.

Current rates of income support are insufficient and are well below the Henderson Poverty Line of \$65 per day (for a single person who is not working). This reduction will exacerbate the economic consequences of the pandemic for marginalised groups and have long-lasting impacts that will be felt across the community.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Barr', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister

09 NOV 2021



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

2020–2021

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

No 26

THURSDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2021

13. COVID-19 PANDEMIC—SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Mr Braddock, by leave, having amended his notice, pursuant to notice, moved—That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) the social and economic impacts of the ACT's COVID outbreak are having disproportionate impacts across the community, deepening inequality. This has particularly affected groups already experiencing disadvantage;
 - (b) these impacts are likely to last for many years, entrenching existing inequality through wage scarring, underemployment, unemployment, and reduced economic prospects;
 - (c) the Federal Government's income supports are insufficient to keep Canberrans out of poverty, further exacerbating the economic consequences for marginalised groups;
 - (d) the Federal Government's choice to stop the COVID disaster payments prioritises the economy over people, is inconsistent with ACT Health advice, and adversely affects thousands of Canberrans still facing restrictions;
 - (e) emergency relief is increasingly accessed repeatedly by Canberrans who are presenting with complex, long-term issues;
 - (f) the ACT Government has an essential role in providing long-term, strategic leadership, as well as supports and services, to help Canberra's social recovery from COVID; and
 - (g) in 2020, the ACT Government commenced work on a community recovery plan to support our community through our extended pandemic community recovery, which is ongoing and being implemented. The Targeted Assistance Strategy, one of the ACT Government's main mechanisms for alleviating hardship and social exclusion, has been agreed to be updated, with options potentially considered in the 2022 Budget process;
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) develop an ACT Social Recovery plan to address the social and economic impacts of COVID. This plan shall:

- (i) identify:
 - (A) the long-term individual, community, and territory-wide impacts of COVID, in particular on groups already experiencing disadvantage; and
 - (B) what personal, material, social and financial supports and strategies are necessary to help Canberra’s social recovery from COVID with a focus on marginalised or disadvantaged groups;
- (ii) be developed in consultation with impacted groups and the wider community, and be clear about the time frames and likely consequences of living with COVID;
- (iii) be underpinned by the ACT Wellbeing Framework, with a particular focus on living standards, access and connectivity, and social connection;
- (iv) create a roadmap to rebuild Canberra’s social fabric, through the safe re-introduction of events, recreational and sporting activities, and educational and volunteering opportunities, with a focus on community building and inclusion;
- (v) specify regular opportunities for revision with feedback from key stakeholder groups; and
- (vi) identify the government programs through which these strategies could be funded and implemented;
- (b) provide quarterly reports to the Assembly on the development and implementation of the ACT Social Recovery Plan;
- (c) incorporate the relevant findings from the agreed update to the ACT’s Targeted Assistance Strategy and associated targeted concession assistance measures, including the current rates concessions, rebates and deferrals system; and
- (d) identify any further measures required to ensure concessions and rebates are adequate and well-targeted, with input from relevant community organisations working to support people in the community; and
- (3) calls on the leaders of all parties represented in the Assembly to write to the Federal leaders of their respective political parties calling for an increase to, and an indexation of, all social security payments so that these are above the Henderson Poverty Line. Copies of these letters shall be tabled in the Assembly by 11 November 2021.

Debate ensued.

Ordered—That the question be divided.

Debate continued.

Paragraph (2) agreed to.

Paragraphs (1) and (3)—Question—put.

The Assembly voted—

AYES, 14		NOES, 7
Ms Berry	Ms Orr	Mr Cain
Mr Braddock	Dr Paterson	Ms Castley
Ms Burch	Mr Pettersson	Mr Hanson
Ms Cheyne	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Kikkert
Ms Clay	Ms Stephen-Smith	Ms Lawder
Ms Davidson	Ms Vassarotti	Ms Lee
Mr Davis		Mr Parton
Mr Gentleman		

And so it was resolved in the affirmative.