



## MEDIA RELEASE

To: News Editor  
From: Uniting Church Western Australia  
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### **Newstart and Youth Allowance payments trapping people in a poverty cycle**

The Uniting Church Western Australia has called on the Federal Government to make an immediate commitment to increase Newstart and Youth Allowance payments to allow thousands of vulnerable Australians to live in dignity above the poverty line.

The proposal was agreed at the church's 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Synod over the weekend, with church members, congregations, schools and agencies urged to support the push and lobby their Federal Members as part of Anti-Poverty Week activities (Sunday 15 to Saturday 21 October 2017).

Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Western Australia, Moderator, Rev Steve Francis said the current rate for Newstart and Youth Allowance was significantly below the ACOSS poverty line and change was needed urgently to help people break free of the poverty cycle.

"At Synod we unanimously agreed to lobby the Federal Government to commit to an immediate process to increase Newstart and Youth Allowance payments to provide recipients with the resources to live above the poverty line," Rev Francis said.

"This increase is essential in order to safeguard the health and wellbeing of individuals and families currently receiving these payments. Living in poverty is stressful and forces people to choose between essential items and services.

"Governments can afford a welfare system that isn't below the poverty line when tax is paid by those who can afford it and we encourage efforts to ensure that all individuals and businesses pay their fair share of tax."

The proposal was jointly brought by the Uniting Church Western Australia's Social Justice Commission and community services agency, UnitingCare West.

"We acknowledge that there are growing pressures on WA households that are particularly challenging for people living below the poverty line, including the low minimum wage, rental affordability and rising electricity, water and public transport costs. The Social Justice Commission and UnitingCare West will continue to advocate for vulnerable people in the WA community to have fair supports provided," Rev Francis said.

A report released by the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) in October 2016 showed there were 731,300 children or 17.4% of all children in Australia living in poverty at the time, an increase of 2% over the past 10 years, from 2004 to 2014. The report found that nearly three million people were living in poverty in Australia in 2014, or 13.3% of the general population.

According to the Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS), in 2016, 'Figures indicate that 240,000 Western Australians live below the poverty line, with a further 150,000 at risk of financial hardship. These figures are likely to be an underestimate, as they do not take into account higher living costs in Western Australia.'

Amanda Hunt, CEO of UnitingCare West will provide the address at the Anti-Poverty Week 2017 Ecumenical Service to be held at 1pm on Tuesday, 17 October at Uniting Church in the City, Wesley Perth.

***For media enquiries and interviews,  
please contact Media and Communications Manager, Maggie Johns on 0419 831 576.***

From Friday 8 to Sunday 10 September 2017, more than 150 Uniting Church members from around Western Australia came together to discuss issues of importance in the life of the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Western Australia at the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting. Synod includes members from the congregations and faith communities of the Presbytery of Western Australia; MLC; Penrhos College; PLC; Scotch College; St Stephen's School; Tranby College; Wesley College; Trinity Residential College and Conference Centre; Good Samaritan Industries; Juniper; UnitingCare West; Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress WA Regional Committee and Beanang Kwuurt Institute.