

HOW TO CALL YOUR FEDERAL MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

1. Plan what you want to say to your Member of Parliament (MP)

The most powerful phone calls are those spoken from the heart, talking about your own concerns and experiences. Make sure to mention:

- that you're a local voter in that constituent;
- your name and any relevant experience of living on income support;
- if you're currently looking for paid work, mention how many jobs you have applied and been knocked back for;
- if you're currently receiving income support, you could talk about how much higher income support payments have helped in the past several months, and what the cuts will mean for you in terms of covering the basics.

Here's a sample script - but remember it's just a guide. Feel free to make it your own!

Hi there – my name is [insert name], and I'm a local constituent. I'm calling because I'm concerned that the government hasn't yet committed to a permanent adequate increase to income support when the Coronavirus Supplement ends in March.

I believe that everyone should be able to cover the cost of healthcare, put food on the table, and keep a secure roof over their head. I know that the government hasn't ruled out going back to the brutal old Newstart rate of \$40 a day. I'm calling to say that I hope that [insert MP name], will support a permanent increase so that everyone can afford the basics and rebuild their lives.

Millions of people need these payments as a lifeline. I urge you to not leave them behind, especially when there is just one job available for every nine people looking for one or more hours.

Other points to raise:

- If you have been searching for paid work, please relay how this has been going for you.
- If you are struggling with the cost of essentials, it's important that your local MP hears what you're going without to make ends meet.

A note about what is an 'adequate' increase:

We strongly encourage you to ask your MP to support the amount that you would like to see JobSeeker rate increased by. ACOSS is calling for the base rate of JobSeeker (\$41 a day) to be raised by at least \$25 a day. But that is just ACOSS's position and we strongly encourage you to put forward to your MP the increased amount that you believe is needed.

2. Find your MP's information

Find your MP's phone number on the Australian Parliament House website here:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/

If you're unsure of who your local MP is, you can find out on the Australian Electoral Commission website using your postcode or locality here: <https://electorate.aec.gov.au/>

3. Make the call

If you call the office of a MP out of blue, it is highly unlikely that you will be able to speak directly to the politician. Politicians are usually in scheduled meetings most of the day booked for weeks in advance. You will most likely be speaking to a member of their staff or occasionally an adviser. If you're nervous, just remember it's literally their job to listen to you as a constituent.

Be courteous and take your time conveying your message in full. The office staff will likely listen attentively and take notes then assure you they will pass on your message to the MP, and they will – hearing what their local community care about (and will vote on) is a priority for MPs.