

Economic Justice Australia – Candidate Survey

EJA will be publishing all responses in full at www.ejaustralia.org.au.

We will also publish which candidates/parties have been asked to fill in this survey and have not responded.

Please return this survey to hello@ejaustralia.org.au.

Candidate Name

Party (if applicable)

Increase the rate of social security payments to above the poverty line

1. [The Treating Families Fairly Report](#) found the Covid-19 Supplement of \$550 per f/n was used for meeting basic needs, paying off household debt, and other strategic expenditures to improve long-term financial security. *Do you agree a permanent increase in social security payments and pensions is necessary and would benefit social security recipients, and Australian society more broadly? If so, by how much?*

Yes

No

Maybe

2. Housing assistance is crucial to improving affordability for renters on the lowest incomes. *Do you agree the Federal Government should raise the rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance as a key approach to improving housing affordability?*

Yes

No

Maybe

Protect the Centrelink public service against staffing cuts and privatisation, to ensure people get the support they need.

3. Services Australia needs to be properly resourced and have sufficient well-trained staff to correctly answer people's questions and provide support when needed, and to process claims lawfully and efficiently. *Do you agree this is better achieved by the public service, or through private companies or labour-hire?*

Public service

Private companies or
labour hire

Other

4. Following unprecedented claim delays and call wait times, in November 2023, the Federal Government committed \$228m for an additional 3000 staff to speed up claim payments and reduce call wait times. *Do you agree with this expenditure? Do you believe these 3000 extra positions should be retained on a permanent basis?*

Agree and should be
retained on a permanent
basis

Disagree and should not be
retained on a permanent
basis

Other

A non-punitive approach to government employment services that helps people increase their participation in the workforce and community

5. Mutual obligation requirements are tasks and activities that a person on JobSeeker payment is required to do to receive their payment. If people don't meet their mutual obligation requirements their payments may be suspended or cancelled. EJA believes this system should be abolished. It has been administered unfairly, and sometimes unlawfully. This has resulted in significant harm, particularly when people's payments have been cancelled or suspended, their mutual obligations are too onerous or unsuitable as they only have a partial capacity to work, and when requirements have interfered with people's ability to search for work and participate

in education and training. *Do you believe that mutual obligation requirements should continue?*

Yes

No

Maybe

6. *If you answered yes or maybe to the previous question, would you be willing to make them without financial penalty e.g. payment suspensions and cancellations?*

Yes

No

Maybe

7. *If you would consider an alternative model, what would that look like?*

Ensuring Robodebt never happens again through meaningful reform.

8. Some of the Robodebt Royal Commission recommendations requiring legislative reform have not been implemented. *Will you make this legislative reform a priority, particularly placing a time limit on debt recovery and regulating the use of automation to ensure a crisis on the scale of Robodebt never happens again?*

Yes

No

Maybe

9. The Robodebt scandal and subsequent Royal Commission demonstrated that a robust legal safety net is a crucial part of a well-functioning social security system. Recommendation 12.4 highlighted the importance of adequately funding social security legal services. It has been estimated that to adequately fund community legal centres specialising in social security law would require an extra \$5 million per year of funding to these services to provide legal service to all Australians wherever they live. *Do you agree this funding is important? Will you publicly commit to this funding?*

Yes

No

Maybe

Increase and index payment that helps people cover heightened costs of living in remote Australia.

10. Remote Area Allowance, a payment to social security recipients who live in remote areas, has not increased in 20 years. It is currently an extra \$9.10 per week. *Given living costs have risen more in remote towns than in metropolitan areas, do you agree it is time to increase and index this allowance?*

Yes

No

Maybe

11. *Will you publicly commit to increasing Remote Area Allowance as a priority?*

Yes

No

Maybe

Make the Disability Support Pension more accessible for people who are eligible.

12. People with significant disability and little or no work capacity are excluded from DSP as a result of the Program of Support requirement. They are effectively consigned to serve an 18-month waiting period with mutual obligation requirements while on JobSeeker Payment. A full EJA brief on this can be found [here](#). *Do you support permanently abolishing the Program of Support?*

Yes

No

Maybe

13. The current cost of doctors' reports, particularly specialist reports required for Disability Support Pension (DSP) applications, are costly and create a barrier for those needing those reports to access their social security entitlements. *Do you agree to introducing a Medicare item number for required medical reports to make applying for a DSP less expensive?*

Yes

No

Maybe

END OF SURVEY

Authorised by Kathryn Allingham, CEO, Economic Justice Australia, Level 3, 55 Pyrmont Bridge Road, Pyrmont NSW 2009