# **Community calls for legislation to**

# **End to Child Poverty**

**Media release**

**October 17, 2024**

New figures project nearly 1million Australian children would be living in poverty by the end of 2024, prompting [**more than 70 Western Australian corporate and not-for profit organisations**](https://www.endchildpoverty.com.au/supportus-1) to call on the Federal Government to introduce legislation to prevent further children experiencing the devastating effects of poverty.

Australia’s unprecedented cost of living and housing crisis has resulted in **another 102,000 children living below the poverty in Australia**, 21,000 of which are here in WA, according to data analysis by Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre.

Speaking out during Anti-Poverty Week, the End Child Poverty campaign has garnered **140 partners across Australia**, 72 in WA. The campaign, run by the Valuing Children Initiative, a project by Centrecare, are calling for a definition, measure and response to child poverty through legislation in the Australia Parliament.

**12 Buckets CEO Larissa Muir** said children growing up in poverty in 2024 are feeling the weight of disadvantage with no clear path out.

“In the space of 12 months we have gone from supporting **160 young people each week to 350 young people** each week across all of our programs,” she said.

“At 12 Buckets we see firsthand how poverty impacts the children and young people in our community. Childhood poverty often goes unnoticed.

“We work with schools and families to provide resources, opportunities, and support that help our children and young people stay engaged in education, develop social skills, and build a sense of belonging. But the scale of this issue requires a larger commitment. We value our children and will take bold action to ensure that no child is left behind, and all can thrive.”

**Samara’s story from 12 Buckets**

Samara is 8 years old. Her family can’t afford the school excursions or basic supplies like pencils for school. She has watched her friends board the bus this year to go on planned excursions from the office window, while her teachers dip into their own pockets to buy her what she needs for class.

**Hamish’s story from 12 Buckets**

Hamish is 16 years old and has been moving between Grandma’s and his uncle’s houses for the past two years.  He has stopped trying to keep up with school because in his words “What’s the point?”.

Senior Industry Fellow with Bankwest Curtin Economic Centre and co-author of *“****Child Poverty in Australia 2024”,* Chris Twomey**said recent economic modelling found **nearly one million Australian children (975,587**)\* are now living in poverty in 2024.

“Our research looked at **the scarring effects of childhood poverty** by comparing the work, health and life outcomes of young people who had grown up in poverty,” he said.

“The biggest single driver of the rising poverty rate is the **rent** – which makes up a bigger slice of the weekly budget for low income households. After COVID, **rental costs** rose much faster for households in the lower quartile of incomes who are living in lower quartile rentals.

“This means, while average rents rose **11.2**% between 2020 and 2022, lower quartile rents rose by **17.8%.** They then rose 16% in 2023 and have risen over 12% so far in 2024.”

“Growing up in poverty children are 8 per cent more likely to experience poverty as adults, 11 per cent less likely to secure work and much more likely to be nervous or unhappy with their lives.”

**Kate O’Hara CEO of Foodbank WA and Co-Chair of Anti-Poverty Week WA 2024**, said in WA, there are 200,000 households facing severe food insecurity in the last 12 months - regularly having whole days of no food,” she said.

“Those hit hardest in WA are low-income households who are now facing their worst environment since the cost-of-living crisis began. To cope, households are simply cutting back overall or relying on credit.

“For many who had turned to family and friends for help before, this support is declining.

“These facts are startling and reinforced in the front-line experience of our Foodbank services. What we do hope happens as a result of Anti-Poverty Week activity, is all organisations and stakeholders that care about the health and wellbeing of our community, gain a clearer picture of the truth too many face, and we come together to find different pathways, if we are to deliver a different outcome. Change is possible and further understanding and collaboration is essential for effective relief.”

**VCI Development Executive and End Child Poverty campaign manager Sarah Quinton** said the rising rate of child poverty in Australia is going unchecked because of the lack of nationally agreed definition and measures.

“We don’t know exactly how many children are living in poverty because we use data sets that are years old. We also use a decades old poverty measure that only looks at income measurement,” she said.

“Poverty for children isn’t only about missing out on meals or a safe place to sleep, although that is deeply hard for children, it can also be about a loss of friendships, less of life opportunities as well as material loss.

“As a nation, we must think beyond job numbers and inflation rates as a measure for child poverty, we must consider the health and mental health impacts on children, which can carry the trauma for decades after they leave home.

**WA Council of Social Services CEO Louise Giolitto** said an Australia with a bright future is one in which all our children have what they need to grow and thrive.

"As research tells us more about the critical role of early development in creating outcomes through the life course, it becomes increasingly clear that child poverty diminishes our life-long opportunities,” she said.

"Conversely, when a child misses the opportunity to realise their potential, we are all diminished as a society. It narrows our future options and potentially adds to future challenges.

"Now, more than ever, we need to see more effective and targeted relief for those doing it toughest in our community."

**Facts**

* \*The figures for 2024 are projections based on the poverty rate for children calculated using 2022 HILDA data, which is children including dependant students under the age of 18 years old.

The 2022 data gives **823,000** children living below a standard 50% poverty line.

The projection has the poverty rate rising from **12.5% in 2021** to **17% in 2024**.

That is an additional 254,000 children over the last 3 years now in poverty.

* For the18-24yr age group, 54% are food insecure, 55% have some form of paid work and 56% are renting.
* The group most at risk of child poverty are **children in single parent families**.
* One in three (**33.4%**) single parent families are living below a 50% median poverty line
* Over two in five (42.7%) live below a 60% median poverty line (the OECD standard).
* One in five children in single parent households live in significant poverty (below 40% median)
* While over one in ten live in extreme poverty (below 30% of median).
* The proportion of children growing up in single parent households rose **11.2%** over the decade between 20-13 and 2023.

[**See the full list of WA and national campaign supporters here**](https://www.endchildpoverty.com.au/supportus-1)

**Media contact:**

End Child Poverty campaign - Sarah Quinton 0439439233

[www.endchildpoverty.comn.au](http://www.endchildpoverty.comn.au)

12 Buckets – Larissa Muir 0413 263 289

[12 Buckets - Change a Young Person's Life](https://12buckets.org/)

BCEC Fellow Chris Twomey 0407 725 025

[BCEC Child Poverty in Australia Report](https://www.endchildpoverty.com.au/aussiestrackaddresschildpoverty/child-poverty-in-australia-2024-report)

WACOSS CEO Louise Giolitto: Fraser Beattie 0421505557