

MEDIA RELEASE: “Fight The Fine” Protest Against Harsh Newstart Measures To Hit Streets Of Adelaide

Protest Against Newstart Fines

Wednesday July 1st

12pm, Max Employment

53-57 Elizabeth Way, Elizabeth

The Anti-Poverty Network SA, with the Australian Unemployment Union, are speaking out against cuts to Newstart Allowance.

Starting from Wednesday July 1st, the government is giving privately-owned employment service providers the power to fine the unemployed at least \$50 for missing a ‘job search’ appointment without a valid excuse (determined by the employment service provider).

Pas Forgione, coordinator of Anti-Poverty Network SA, said "These changes, giving employment services providers even more power over the lives of unemployed people, are part of a nasty pattern of 'big stick' policies that seek to punish job-seekers for not having jobs - policies that assume the unemployed are unemployed because they are not searching hard enough, desperately enough, for work. In fact, there are simply not enough jobs to go around. These fines for Newstart recipients will increase hardship and stress for those already on very low incomes, without helping anyone find paid employment."

Owen Bennett, founder of Australian Unemployment Union said, "The Newstart entitlement is currently \$280 per fortnight below the poverty line – the lowest unemployment benefit in the developed world. This is blaming the unemployed for the government’s failure to address Australia’s unemployment crisis. There are currently eleven job seekers competing for every job vacancy in Australia."

Caterina Cinanni, president of the National Union of Workers said that low wage workers in casual employment make up a growing section of the workforce in Australia: “Forty percent of work in Australia is now casual work. While casual workers work extremely hard, they often don’t know from one day to the next whether they will have a shift. Casual workers are reliant on benefits, not because they want to be but because they can’t earn enough money with minimum wage and minimal shifts!! These workers can easily miss job search appointments because they are working."

For media comment, contact:

Pas Forgione, Anti-Poverty Network SA: 0411 587 663.

Owen Bennett, Australian Unemployment Union: 0481 186 470.