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In the news ...

In each newsletter we gather a collection of recent news stories related to welfare that you may have missed. Please click on the links below to read these articles.

- ⇒ [Govt. not committing to changing jobseeker benefit rules despite surge in applications](#)
- ⇒ [Thousands face welfare struggle if they lose their jobs](#)
- ⇒ [Long wait times stressing those needing W&I support](#)
- ⇒ [CPAG calls on govt. to change welfare system](#)

Covid-19 benefit increase

At the beginning of lockdown the Government offered beneficiaries a permanent weekly increase of \$25. While the Ministry of Social Development claims that the payment is "making a difference", we join other advocates in arguing that the support is not enough to cover many additional costs associated with the lockdown. Furthermore we are concerned that there is a lack of clarity around how this increase impacts on supplementary payments, such as Temporary Additional Support, Accommodation Supplement and Childcare Assistance. We are working to gain more clarity from Work and Income about what this means for those on benefits.

Research update

Thanks to a generous grant from Lotteries, BAS is conducting research into the impact of welfare sanctions. We are in Stage One of the project involving a nationwide survey of beneficiaries who have been sanctioned by Work and Income. The rationale behind welfare sanctions is that these encourage beneficiaries to change their behaviour. Our initial analysis of the data suggests, however, that many beneficiaries receive multiple sanctions and may not understand how sanctions can be avoided. This suggests that sanctions are ineffective in modifying the behaviour of welfare recipients.

Staff working from home

In response to COVID-19 all of our staff are now working from home. We ask all clients to please phone, email or message our office for advice. Our office phones will still be operating but all calls will go to voicemail, and the voicemails are then forwarded by email to us. We ask for clients to leave a message with your details and we can then get back to you.

Expected increase in demand for BAS services as a result of COVID-19

Treasury are predicting that New Zealand's unemployment rate could hit "double digits" as the effects of Covid-19 are felt on our economy. As we are the only organisation in Christchurch offering advice on welfare issues, we expect our service to be in more demand than ever over the coming months. We welcome any donation that would enable us to meet this increased demand. Thank you in advance for your support. **Our account details are: 03-1592-0091931-00**

“Over the past twelve months BAS has assisted clients in gaining \$240,000 in entitlements including increases in benefit rates and the clearance of incorrectly applied debts to meet their most basic needs.”