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Why should the poor out bush pay more? Raise the remote area allowance now!

Every politician says they are worried about Australians doing it tough. This week decision makers in Canberra are finding out from representatives of the Central Land Council (CLC) just how tough things are for Aboriginal people and why the poor pay more for where they live.

Council members [Roxanne Kenny](#) and [Maryanne Malbunka](#), joined by CLC general manager Dr Josie Douglas, are heading to Canberra to explain to members of parliament how their families are struggling to survive amid soaring prices for fuel and household goods. How they can no longer afford to drive hundreds of kilometres to town to find cheaper options and shop around to make ends meet.

The already high costs of the basics are worsening. In remote communities, living costs are 40 per cent more than in the nearest town. Kids are going hungry. People can't afford to keep their power on over long hot desert summers. Conditions are dangerous for the elderly, babies and infants and make food storage and cooling almost impossible.

It doesn't have to be this way. There is a solution.

CLC members believe substantially lifting the [remote area allowance](#) for the first time in more than 25 years will make a difference to their families. They have been calling for this [for a long time](#), but their voices go unheard.

The Hawke government brought in the allowance in 1984 to help compensate for the higher living costs out bush – \$7 a week back when a litre of fuel cost 50 cents and a litre of milk 70 cents. Today it pays \$9.10 a week, at a time when diesel costs up to \$4 a litre in some communities.

The Australian Council of Social Services and the Economic Justice Alliance are two of 30 organisations from across the country backing the call to lift the allowance to \$121.30 a week. They will join the CLC for a press conference during Anti-Poverty Week.

PRESS CONFERENCE, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, MURAL HALL

THURSDAY 15 OCTOBER 2026, 10 AM

Quote attributable to Roxanne Kenny: *Our people are suffering. Fuel can be up to \$4 or more and the community shops are so dear. You walk in with a \$100 you come out with just one plastic bag. The Remote Area Allowance is basically lolly money, enough for bubble gum. On school holidays I have about 20 people in my three-bedroom house to feed.*

Quote attributable to Maryanne Malbunka: *I really worry about families on income support. Just one day after payday – by the time they've paid for groceries at our expensive local shop, their rent, their phone, fuel or the Bush Bus – they're broke and have to borrow from other family or go hungry. They can only afford pre-paid electricity for the first four days of the fortnight and get into big debt to keep the power on. My partner and I have full-time jobs and struggle to also support family on income support.*

Quote attributable to Dr Josie Douglas: *Raising the remote area allowance is one compassionate and practical thing politicians can do right now to relieve the extreme cost of living crisis faced by the poorest Australians out bush. The allowance clearly hasn't kept up with the skyrocketing prices in remote communities for a long time, but people are now at breaking point. We implore anyone who believes in a fair go to support a meaningful increase.*

MEDIA CONTACT: Sophie Berrill | 0461 396 054 | media@clc.org.au