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The South Australian Council of Social Service reveals that new cost of living data shows a clear need for increases in state government concessions for low income households.

The latest [SACOSS Cost of Living Update](#) released today shows that lowest income households are being hit hardest by cost of living pressures, and that over the last 5 years key government concessions have failed to keep pace with rapidly rising prices.

The Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS) and the SA Taxi Subsidy Service (SATTS - access cabs for people with disabilities) rates have not increased while relevant prices have risen by between 15% and 21%. Energy and water concessions have also lagged behind increasing prices.

**Cost of Living Changes and State Government Concessions
December 2008-2013**

Cost of Living Area	Price Increase %	Relevant Concession Payment	% Increase
Housing			
• Electricity	68.1	SA Electricity Concession	37.5
• Water & Sewerage	60.0	SA Water Concession	47.5
• Water & Sewerage	60.0	SA Sewerage Concession	15.8
Travel Accommodation	17.7	PATS Accommodation Subsidy	0.0
Transport			
• Fuel	21.3	PATS fuel subsidy	0.0

• Transport Fares	15.2	SA Transport Subsidy Scheme	0.0
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SACOSS Executive Director, Ross Womersley said,

“While all households have to deal with rising prices including massive increases in the cost of electricity, gas and water, increases in household income have generally covered these rises”

"Over the last ten years, the cost of living for households on base level income support payments like Newstart, Youth or Widow's Allowance has gone up nearly 20% faster than the general inflation rate."

Aside from federal government income support payments, state government concessions are essential to ensuring that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our society have access to basic services like energy, water, health and transport.

Mr Womersley said,

“The value of these concessions is eroding with rapidly rising prices and we are calling on all parties in the coming state election to commit to increases and proper indexation of concessions such as PATS and SATSS, and changing the energy concessions to a percentage of the bill rather than the current inadequate flat rate.”

The call to increase and properly index concessions is central to the 11 point [Cost of Living Relief Package](#) SACOSS is asking all political parties to support in the state election.

Beyond concessions, the SACOSS Cost of Living Update found that in the December 2013 quarter the cost of living went up by 0.6% for aged pensioners and other welfare recipients.

This was below the general inflation rate and provides some relief for households, with key utilities costs not seeing the rapid rises of previous years. However, those on base level income support payments, were still \$5 a week worse off than at the same time last year.

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