



THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WORD IN THE DICTIONARY

By Neil Starkie

“Tariff is the most beautiful word in the dictionary.” - President Donald Trump.

But for The Spiers Centre, the most beautiful word in the dictionary is ‘hope.’

As the global economic landscape shifts once again, Western Australia and the rest of the World will feel the effects of recently announced tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump. These tariffs, which increase costs for Australian exporters, threaten key industries such as agriculture, wine making, mining, and manufacturing—leading to potential job losses, reduced wages, and further economic strain. While political leaders debate trade policies and their long-term implications, the reality on the ground is clear: families and individuals in our community are struggling now. For them, the so-called ‘cost-of-living crisis’ is not a crisis at all—it is a permanent reality.

The Lasting Cost-of-Living Challenge

The term ‘crisis’ implies a temporary emergency with an eventual resolution. But as prices continue to rise, wages stagnate, and the essentials of life, like affordable housing remain out of reach for many, it’s clear that financial hardship is no longer an isolated event—it’s an enduring challenge. The tariffs are just one more burden added to an already unsustainable situation, making food, housing, and energy even harder to afford for those already at risk.

The Spiers Centre: Offering Hope in an Uncertain Economy

While economic policies are shaped at high levels, their consequences are felt in everyday homes. At The Spiers Centre, we see firsthand how financial stress affects people’s lives. Our clients are not just statistics—they are parents struggling to put food on the table, older Australians choosing between

medication and rent, and young people unsure of how they will ever afford to leave home. When wages don't stretch far enough and government support remains inadequate, it is organisations like The Spiers Centre that provide a vital safety net.

Our services extend beyond emergency relief. We focus on long-term financial resilience by offering financial counselling, advocacy, and education to help people navigate an increasingly unaffordable world. But as demand for these services grows, so too does the challenge of securing sustainable funding to meet ongoing community needs.

Structural Change is Needed

Rather than continuing to operate in crisis-response mode, we need to rethink our approach to social support in a world where economic hardship is an everyday reality. This means:

- Advocating for policy reforms that improve income support, rental affordability, and fair employment conditions.
- Securing long-term funding for community organisations so services remain available without uncertainty.
- Expanding financial literacy and resilience programs so people can better navigate financial pressures.
- Partnering with housing providers, local businesses, and social enterprises to create lasting solutions.

Hope Overcomes Hardships

For some, 'tariff' may be the most beautiful word in the dictionary. But at The Spiers Centre, we know that 'hope' is more powerful. Hope is what keeps people moving forward when the system fails them. Hope is what we provide through our services, ensuring that no one in our community feels abandoned in the face of financial stress.

As economic challenges persist, we need to ask: what kind of society do we want to build? One that prioritises economic policies over people, or one that ensures every individual has access to the support they need?

If you believe in the power of hope, we invite you to stand with us. Whether through donations, volunteering, or advocacy, you can help ensure that hope remains the most beautiful word for those who need it most.