

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Schedule 2 of the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2010 (Changes to Disability Support Pension)

SUBMISSION

SUBMISSION NUMBER: 9

SUBMITTER

Name and Address Withheld

A SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

In reference to The Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2010.

The Community Affairs committee will examine Schedule 2 of the bill. This schedule will introduce an ongoing requirement for residence in Australia for a disability support pension. The amendments will close a loophole that has allowed continued payment of disability support pension to people who live permanently overseas but return to Australia every 13 weeks in order to retain their pension.

SUMMARY

According to the 2010-11 Budget Papers of the Australian Government, the Disability Support Pension costs 12.9 billion dollars per year, which is 3.6% of the total Budget expenditure of 354.6 billion dollars. If this amount of 12.9 billion dollars is divided by the 22.51 million residents of Australia, this amounts to \$573.61c per person per year, or \$11.03c per person per week. It should be considered that this 11 dollars per week is an essential insurance policy, in case the Australian person is struck down by a debilitating and crippling illness, or is severely injured or paralysed in a motor vehicle accident, or has their back broken, their eyes destroyed, or their arm ripped off in a factory or agricultural accident, or is tortured by excruciatingly painful nervous system diseases.

One has to question the wisdom of begrudging the disabled this 11 dollars per week expenditure, particularly when Australia is now the ninth wealthiest sovereign nation on earth, according to figures from the International Monetary Fund. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Average Weekly Earnings are about 1300 dollars per week.

Wayne Swan, the Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer, put it best in his book titled "Postcode: The Splintering of a Nation", published in 2005. On page 140, Wayne Swan writes about the Disability Support Pension:

"Why does a welcoming, forward-looking, self-believing nation such as ours have to have plans like this to punish our most vulnerable citizens? Why does a rich country such as ours have to do this? Why, when we are trying to build a nation which offers a way of life second to none in the world, are we deciding to be this mean? A pension cut of 60 or 70 dollars a fortnight would mean little to a [Government] Minister - maybe the price of a quality bottle of red - but to a person with a disability it may mean the difference between affording additional expenses to manage their disability or not"

(page 140, "Postcode: The Splintering of a Nation", by Wayne Swan, Pluto Press Australia 2005)

A small number of Disability Support Pensioners, a fraction of one percent of the 750,000 people on the DSP, have sought relief from the pain and suffering of their disability, by travelling and living overseas, mostly in Asia, where the cost of living is as little as 20% of the cost of living in Australia, and where their pension therefore goes a lot further. Many of these people are severely disabled, living with severe pain and suffering. Many have described how they are much better able to manage and cope with their disability, with their pain and suffering, by living in Asia, where the cost of living is much cheaper, and where there are opportunities to seek the alleviation of pain and suffering through religious meditation.

Mr. Paul Donegan, an adviser to Minister Jenny Macklin, wrote a letter to a Disability Support Pensioner in October 2010, explaining the new legislation, and in the letter he stated that: "[the DSP] is designed to engage people of workforce age in activities in Australia that will lead to greater levels of economic and social participation". However, this is directly contradicted by a report of the Social Policy Research Centre titled "Disability Support Pension New Customer Focus Groups". This report was prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services in 2004. The conclusion of the report was that Disability Support Pensioners are overwhelmingly excluded from economic and social participation, and they experience high levels of stigmatisation, discrimination, ostracism, and insurmountable barriers to economic and social participation, including high levels of direct discrimination by employers.

On the 20th of October 2010, Minister Jenny Macklin issued a Media Release about this legislation, and in this Media Release, it is claimed that "This change is expected to save taxpayers around \$3 million a year when fully operational."

However, there is a great amount of anecdotal evidence to indicate that most Disability Support Pensioners who are affected by this change have already made preparations to return to Australia and re-establish their residence in Australia. There are anecdotal stories about several Disability Support Pensioners who have already made preparations to bring their spouses and children from homes in Asia, and re-establish homes and residences in Australia. There is much anecdotal evidence to indicate that almost all of the Disability Support Pensioners who are affected by this legislation are planning to travel and reside in such a way that their pension is continued. And so there will not be a saving of \$3 million dollars per year as claimed. On the contrary, because the Disability Support Pensioners will now be receiving Australian Health Care, Medicare, Pharmaceuticals in Australia, Rent Assistance, public housing, transport subsidies, telephone subsidies, Child Care and Education in Australia, and additional allowances for spouses and children, all of these additional government resources, subsidies and allowances will actually cost the federal government well in excess of \$3 million dollars a year.

The Committee is requested to call for an audit, by the Australian National Audit Office, or by the Treasury, to discover that in fact this legislation will not save taxpayers \$3 million dollars, it will actually cost taxpayers in excess of \$3 million dollars.

The Committee is also requested to closely examine The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed by Australia on 30th of March 2007, and ratified by the Australian Parliament on 17th of July 2008, which reads in part:

"Article 18: Liberty of movement and nationality

1. States Parties shall recognize the rights of persons with disabilities to liberty of movement, to freedom to choose their residence and to a nationality, on an equal basis with others.."

The Committee is requested to determine if this legislation violates this Article 18 of the Convention.

A particular appeal is made to the Deputy Chair of the Committee, Senator Rachel Siewert. If one reads the website of the Australian Greens, it can be seen that Senator Siewert has made many speeches and statements in support of disabled people, and in support of the human rights of disabled people. In addition, the leader of the Australian Greens, Senator Bob Brown, is one of the foremost champions of human rights in Australia. A particular appeal is made to Senator Siewert, to call for an Audit to discover that this legislation will actually cost the government millions of dollars in additional spending and allowances for Disability Support Pensioners who have been forced to return and stay in Australia, and that in fact the government is attempting to spend millions of dollars in order to infringe the human rights of Disability Support Pensioners, and increase their pain and suffering.

A particular appeal is made to Senator Siewert, to discuss this issue with Senator Bob Brown and Adam Bandt, the Greens member of the House of Representatives, with a view to blocking this legislation in the House of Representatives and the Senate. And in its place, Adam Bandt should introduce a Private Members Bill into the House of Representatives, a Bill that will increase the overseas portability of the Disability Support Pension to 26 weeks, as it was before 2004. By virtue of their great success at the 2010 election, the Australian Greens have a mandate to take real legislative action and enact their values of equity, social equality and compassion.....values which have been lost and forgotten by other parties.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND TREASURER WAYNE SWAN DEFENDS DISABILITY SUPPORT PENSIONERS AND THEIR RIGHT TO TRAVEL OVERSEAS.

In 2005, the then federal Shadow Treasurer, Wayne Swan published a book titled "Postcode: The Splintering of a Nation". This is essentially a manifesto about what Wayne Swan intends to do when he becomes Treasurer (and Deputy Prime Minister).

The blurb on the back cover states: "Australia is a prosperous country, but the benefits of this prosperity are not being fairly shared - the Australian nation has become a frayed patchwork of winners and losers from economic change.....Outlining what a reforming Labor government must do to promote economic equality and deal with a dangerous level of social exclusion, Wayne Swan sets out a blueprint to halt the splintering of the nation."

Here are a selection of quotes from the book, concerning Wayne Swan's attitude to Disability Support Pensioners:

"We should begin by examining our values. At every turn we are exhorted to 'dob in a dole bludger', resent the pensions paid to the 55-year-old former labourer whose back has finally given way after a life of shovelling, and accept as fair the golden handshakes given to company directors for losing millions of dollars that belonged to mum and dad shareholders." (page 11)

"Most people would have seen the occasional 'A Current Affair' or 'Today Tonight' story involving three or four young men living on the dole who surf by day and make do on baked beans and beer at night. The stories of these young people are used to suggest that hundreds of thousands of unemployed Australians live at the beach with no intention of looking for work. While there are many people on government benefits and low incomes living in and migrating to our sunbelt regions, few are the archetypal beach bum dole bludgers of tabloid TV fantasy." (page 35)

"The exodus of Disability Support Pensioners from capital cities and the dry farming regions of Australia [to coastal 'sunbelt' regions] suggest recipients are trying to achieve a balance between climate and lifestyle on the one hand, and manage financial costs such as housing on the other" (page 38)

"In the following 2002-03 Budget, there was no further action on the common workforce age payment. Instead, the Government announced it's plans to remove 200,000 Disability Pensioners from the payment to Newstart through a toughening of the work test used to judge people's eligibility for the payment. This act of post-election bastardry was one of the most depressing things I have witnessed in my time in national politics. We were treated to the Government's attempt to justify the breaking of its pre-election promise by branding people with a disability as malingerers. Until that time I believed my opposite number, Amanda Vanstone, had legitimate claims to be called a liberal. But her enthusiastic embrace of the Government's campaign to push these cuts through the parliament exposed her as no more than a political hyena. The Minister's proposals could not be justified in terms of welfare reform. The cuts would remove the income and material assistance available to people with disabilities and ask them to go out and get a job. The question that no government member from the Prime Minister down will answer is, why you need to cut someone's pension to help them get work. The sustainability of the social security system is under threat only because the current government took the view during its first six years in office to consign welfare recipients - from job seekers to parents, to people with disabilities - to the scrapheap.

Why does a welcoming, forward-looking, self-believing nation such as ours have to have plans like this to punish our most vulnerable citizens? Why does a rich country such as ours have to do this? Why, when we are trying to build a nation which offers a way of life second to none in the world, are we deciding to be this mean? A pension cut of 60 or 70 dollars a fortnight would mean little to a Coalition Minister - maybe the price of a quality bottle of red - but to a person with a disability it may mean the difference between affording additional expenses to manage their disability or not. The cuts show the Howard Government is either completely oblivious to the situation, or is so uncaring that it is not capable of understanding how little so many Australians in this country have to live on. Nobody disputes the need for welfare reform - nobody. But the Coalition's cuts are not reform: they are a full frontal attack on the social safety net that protects disabled Australians from destitution. As a nation we desperately need welfare reform. But that cannot be achieved by 'nickel and diming' vulnerable pensioners." (pages 139-140)

"And as inequality grows, we are also seeing the emergence of a strange downward envy, as many of those just above the poverty line blame the poor just below them for their own plight. Pauline Hanson exploited this feeling of resentment, which often combines attacks on 'dole bludgers' and 'welfare cheats' with racial intolerance." (page 160)

On Tuesday, 7th of October 2003, Wayne Swan made a speech to the House of Representatives, opposing elements of the Family and Community Services and Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (2003 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2003, and in particular, Wayne Swan specifically opposed the reduction of overseas portability for Disability Support Pensioners. Here is an excerpt of his speech, taken from the Hansard:

Tuesday, 7 October 2003
Page: 20653

Mr SWAN (Lilley) :

"I now move to the specific provisions of this bill relating to portability. The measure within this legislation that concerns the opposition is the plan to limit the generosity of the portability provisions relating to work force age social security payments. In particular, this bill seeks to reduce the allowable period of temporary overseas absence for portable social security payments from 26 weeks to 13 weeks. This new portability period will also apply to a range of payments, including the disability support pension and family tax benefit. Labor is particularly concerned about the impact of this measure on some of our larger communities that have a heritage overseas. This includes former UK citizens and also the Greek community.

There are good reasons why the portability provisions should be 26 weeks and not 13. Many families who have parents or siblings living overseas are called upon to go to their aid when they get sick or are dying. In some cases this may involve finalising a person's estate. Often there is a need for a person to spend considerable time overseas. There has never been any evidence presented that shows the current rules have been abused. In fact, the net savings the government is claiming for this provision amount to \$4.1 million, and I think they confirm the fact that the government also does not believe that the rules have been abused. These are mean changes that will have a direct impact on people who have loved ones in other countries and they are changes which we will be urging Senator Patterson to join with us in rejecting when this bill reaches the Senate."

A PUBLIC OPINION POLL AND FOCUS GROUP: WHAT DO THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE THINK ABOUT DISABILITY SUPPORT PENSIONERS TRAVELLING AND LIVING OVERSEAS.

The Australian Parliament is supposed to represent the democratic will of the Australian people. So it would be useful if there could be an opinion poll and focus group about "What the Australian People think about Disability Support Pensioners travelling and living overseas".

On the 28th of March, 2010, the Minister Jenny Macklin published a Media Release about the legislation before the Committee, The Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2010. The media release stated: "The Australian Government will crack down on people on the Disability Support Pension (DSP) who live permanently overseas but return to Australia every 13 weeks in order to retain their pension."

On the 28th of March, 2010, The Sunday Mail newspaper of Queensland published an article reporting on this Media Release, an article titled "Welfare loophole allows disability pensioners to go on permanent vacation". On the website of this newspaper, couriermail.com.au, the article was also published, and readers were invited to post their comments on the website. 114 people posted their comments. This article and the 114 comments are reproduced below, and are also still available at the website, couriermail.com.au. Everything indicates that these 114 comments are the honest response of 114 Australian voters from around Queensland and Australia, and can be viewed as type of rough opinion poll and focus group about the issue of Disability Support Pensioners travelling and living overseas. The website, couriermail.com.au, probably keeps the ISP address of the people who posted the comments, and this is further evidence that the 114 comments are a true indication of the opinion of the Australian people about this issue.

A careful study and statistical analysis of these 114 comments indicates:

4 comments were made on March 27, 2010
94 comments were made on March 28, 2010
16 comments were made on or after March 29, 2010

25 commenters gave their address as Brisbane and suburbs
23 commenters gave their address as other parts of Queensland
18 commenters gave their address as other parts of Australia

70 out of 114 commenters - 61% - APPROVED of Disability Support Pensioners travelling and living overseas.
13 out of 114 commenters - 11% - DISAPPROVED of Disability Support Pensioners travelling and living overseas.

36 commenters mentioned the large difference in the cost of living between Australia and Asia.

14 commenters mentioned the additional costs to the Australian government in health care, housing etc, if the DSPers were forced to spend more time in Australia.

10 commenters alluded to the concept of "Downward Envy", that some people are strangely envious of poor people, and want to make the poor people suffer even more.

Here is the newspaper article and the 114 comments from the couriermail.com.au website:

Welfare loophole allows disability pensioners to go on permanent vacation

Simon Kearney From: The Sunday Mail (Qld) March 27, 2010 8:29PM

A LOOPHOLE in welfare laws has been allowing hundreds of disability support pensioners to use their pensions to travel overseas most of the year and keep second homes in popular South-East Asian holiday destinations.

The jet-setting lives of 776 disability support pensioners were discovered by a joint Centrelink and Department of Immigration investigation, which found many were taking up to nine overseas trips a year.

The study uncovered 154 gold-class frequent flyers who spent all but eight weeks a year overseas. Of these, 71 spent less than a month in Australia and there were eight described as fly-in, fly-out pensioners who spent only a week a year in Australia.

The loophole allows disability support pensioners to keep claiming the pension, which is now more than \$700 a fortnight, if they return to Australia once every 13 weeks.

Thailand and the Philippines were the top two locations for welfare recipients living in second homes overseas.

In both countries, \$700 a fortnight is considered a small fortune, much more than the earnings of many working full-time, who would consider themselves relatively well off.

Community Services Minister Jenny Macklin said the Federal Government would close the loophole, which allowed the 154 worst offenders to spend most of their time overseas, costing taxpayers \$3 million a year.

Even though only Australian residents can lodge a claim for the disability support pension, and those on the DSP can only be absent from Australia for up to 13 weeks, there are cases of DSP recipients living permanently overseas and flying back to Australia every 13 weeks to continue receiving the pension, Ms Macklin said.

It is not known if those who claimed pensions while living overseas were working while overseas.

Comments on this story

Cynical of Off the Planet Posted at 8:55 PM March 27, 2010

How many of these recipients are originally from Thailand and the Philippines? There's a huge racket going on with foreigners marrying older and infirm Australians primarily to get

citizenship (the poor Aussies think it's love) and they sponsor their families over so they all end up here.

Comment 1 of 114

Jack McDONALD of Brisbane Posted at 8:59 PM March 27, 2010

This Government wouldn't have a clue would they,,couldn't track an elephant through an acre of porridge,all this crooked theft going on right under their noses,they now know of this,lets see what they do about it,my money says they wont do a thing as they donot know what to do,our disability pensioners living overseas while the illegal immigrants live here in Australia,great Country we live in,Jack,(Brisbane.

Comment 2 of 114

Africanus Posted at 9:08 PM March 27, 2010

I guess the question is whether they are genuinely disabled. If so, who cares where they live.

Comment 3 of 114

p davis Posted at 11:00 PM March 27, 2010

Well i don't know how they do it i am flat out paying bills and eating on the \$671 i get.How do they get \$700?Maybe some of us are getting ripped off by centrelink.

Comment 4 of 114

Dont really blame them of Bris Posted at 11:25 PM March 27, 2010

In some ways you could hardly blame them when a very basic one bedroom flat costs \$200+ per week to rent in any city in Aust, leaving the grand some of \$150 to cover all living expenses, food, medicines, clothes, running cars etc. If they are disability pensioners that generally would mean they are visiting doctors, hospitals, subsidized medicines etc. which they are entitled to and would not be using if they are out of the country most of the time. They could actually afford to pay for those things in many other countries. Living on a pension in this country is no picnic. It is basic survival and that is all.

Comment 5 of 114

wanderingstrays Posted at 12:31 AM March 28, 2010

Why not ? Boat people on shopping sprees so why can't Ozzy citizens get something. All we need to do is pay just a little bit more in taxes.

Comment 6 of 114

John Williams of Brisbane Posted at 12:49 AM March 28, 2010

What do I think? I think my back hurts.

Comment 7 of 114

anon e-mouse of rock #3 Posted at 1:39 AM March 28, 2010

why not? - their paltry pension would have them living as paupers here in oz, far below the

poverty line, so why not let them be overseas where their pathetic sum of \$350 a week can give them a half decent life??

Comment 8 of 114

My opinion of Brisbane Posted at 4:46 AM March 28, 2010

i know of one that is doing it and getting away with it. I hope she is one of the ones that Centrelink found, because I am sick and tired of watching her live it up while I struggle from day to day.

Comment 9 of 114

Liz Hollens-Riley of Benarkin Posted at 5:30 AM March 28, 2010

Do not blame them. Blame the governments inefficient departments if anyone, has had to deal with them, you will know what I mean i.e. centerlink being a prime example.

Comment 10 of 114

Angry DSP of Brisbane Posted at 5:35 AM March 28, 2010

How the heck do they get travel oversea, im on DSP i dont spend like that i have to pay my bills such of phone, internet, food and rent cost and go card, it make me angry with someone that who goes to oversea how do they get that much than i do. i had not had been oversea since 15 years ago.

Comment 11 of 114

rodney allsworth of morayfield Posted at 5:45 AM March 28, 2010

perhaps jenny macklin should temper her critisizm and think about the \$70million that went overseas in the first cash handout,and then the \$millions lost on ceiling insulation from china and which has left us wiith loss of life and homes burned to the ground, and then of the thousands of illegals who arrive by boat and get everything on a platter plus money to spend from the taxpayers purse. MRS MACKLIN would do well to shut her mouth about theft of the public purse.to use these disability support persons as some sort of EXTRAVIGANT MISSUSERS IS TOTALLY DISPROPORSIONATE TO THE TRUTH. but then this is politics isnt it. no point talking truth here then. rod qld

Comment 12 of 114

steve of goldcoast Posted at 6:06 AM March 28, 2010

Abolish dual citizenship it is the biggest con in this country.Remember Rudds Stimulus package,cheques money paid to peole living overseas and dead people.Yes Rudd is a real ECONOMIC CONSERVATIVE spend spend spend ,as long as it is no his money...And we will be paying off Labos debt for years .But at least boat people will have the benefit of taxpayer dole money,medicare card,free houses even if they don't work ..

Comment 13 of 114

Jon the Baby Boomer of Brisbane Posted at 6:35 AM March 28, 2010

What a great idea. Encourage all pensioners to take up this option. No pensioners on our failing medical system as well reducing heaps of age care support costs. Gets them off the

roads as well. Start to sound good? Government made an emotion charged decision in stopping what could be a win win for all, including a developing country. So what if they work over there many of us oldies are trades, business, and professionals and could bring care and a better way of life to others.

Comment 14 of 114

Tim Posted at 6:46 AM March 28, 2010

I don't blame them - they are not prisoners in this country. To live from \$ 700 a fortnight here is a total nightmare if you even want to have a glimpse of a halfway decent life. It's the Australian government's fault, as well as the unbelievable greed in this country, from supermarkets to landlords. You don't have to live in misery if you've a choice, state pension or not.

Comment 15 of 114

Not a jet setter of Gold Coast Posted at 6:50 AM March 28, 2010

Don't know how they do it. My husband gets \$440 a fortnight because he is chronically ill with a life threatening illness. I get %450 a fortnight aged pension. We are deemed to have an income much higher than we actually get from our part time business (necessary so we can pay the \$750 a fortnight rent) and assets far higher than the few sticks of secondhand furniture and decrepit car we actually own. Centrelink makes up its own rules, and even though the ATO assess our income at a certain level, we are 'deemed' to have four times the reality. So there are now two classes of welfare poor. Those of us who are living way below what is considered the poverty line and being open and honest and being punished for it and those who are savvy and can use the rules to their advantage. Never been to Bali, think I will just move there and live in a Kampong. Might even be a step up financially.

Comment 16 of 114

maybe i'll try of brisbane Posted at 6:53 AM March 28, 2010
good on them for finding a way to live on very little money

Comment 17 of 114

Justine Posted at 7:01 AM March 28, 2010

This is the sort of tabloid journalism that encourages lazy, cynical politicians to play on envy and wedge politics to get votes. it is comes as no surprise that some of the groups who are least able to defend themselves, disability pensioners, the old and the ill are set upon and blamed by politicians to divert attention away from their own inadequacies and omissions in planning and public policy.

Comment 18 of 114

Gerry Atrik of SE Qld Posted at 7:02 AM March 28, 2010

The politicians will close this loophole. How about they close some of the loopholes that allow themselves to claim all these additional benefits after they are no longer politicians. What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

Comment 19 of 114

Boney Posted at 7:04 AM March 28, 2010

I knew I shouldn't have receive Veteran Affairs Pension oops sorry compensation through Veteran Affairs for a disability while in the service. All year it is called a pension until Veteran Affairs has to hand out money then it is called compensation.

Comment 20 of 114

Chris Posted at 7:11 AM March 28, 2010

What business is it of the government where they live...we are now an over taxed, over governed people. Why don't they just bring in a dictatorship and be done with it? I agree with comment 5..it is just to expensive for us who have PAID taxes for YEARS to live here especially when bloody illegal not wanted here "tourists" get given 60 grand of OUR taxes to live on and we get a lousy 700\$ every two weeks! This govt stinks!

Comment 21 of 114

Carolyn of Townsville Posted at 7:12 AM March 28, 2010

A huge rort that needs to be stopped.

Comment 22 of 114

Bill Aspen Posted at 7:14 AM March 28, 2010

â??Well you can have a pension, Mr Jones, but only if you are prepared to sit in Australia, pay huge living costs, barely scrap by and generally live in misery. I understand that for the same money you could live in SE Asia very comfortably, but weâ??re only prepared to give you the money if you have to live in squalor. You choice Mr Jonesâ?!.â?

Comment 23 of 114

Ron from Albany Creek Posted at 7:32 AM March 28, 2010

One way for them to live a comfortable life.

Comment 24 of 114

tallyon of tally Posted at 7:40 AM March 28, 2010

If they're on disabilities means most would be on medication... maybe they sell it over there to milk the system further and make huge profits.....there ya go thats how they get away with it! and live like kings.

Comment 25 of 114

John of Cairns Posted at 8:00 AM March 28, 2010

This is not their fault if they are on a disability and they have been paying their taxes all their lives.Why does not the Australian government close the loophole on illegal boat people arriving here and they each of these parasites get double what a pensioner get per fortnight.

Comment 26 of 114

isabella Posted at 8:01 AM March 28, 2010

Centrefraud does not properly investigate complaints. In addition to public housing, many

pensioners have working partners but the government does not care. This is all part of the economic stimulus.

Comment 27 of 114

Michael Carden of Brisbane Posted at 8:04 AM March 28, 2010

I agree with Africanus. If they re disabled and Australians who cares where they live. And lets face it, the disability pension is poverty payment here but in South East Asia is comfortable

Comment 28 of 114

ralph of gold coast Posted at 8:06 AM March 28, 2010

People are coming to Australia for a better life, it is no different to these people going to Thailand or Philippines for a cheaper life. Australia is becoming a ripoff country to live in due to so-called world parity pricing. Governments think it is OK to raise the price of fuel, water, electricity etc because 'that's what it costs overseas'. I reckon go for it if that is going to improve your quality of life. Some jealous bureaucrat will change it so these people will have to return to Australia and struggle to survive.

Comment 29 of 114

B Busch of Bellbowrie Posted at 8:09 AM March 28, 2010

I don't blame them at all. Why not live in a place where your miserable pittance is actually worth something? Why live here on bread and water when there are other options?

Comment 30 of 114

GlenF Posted at 8:16 AM March 28, 2010

If they are genuinely disabled then I would like to thank them for getting out of the Medicare queue and taking their burdens elsewhere. However if they can afford to fly to Australia every 13 weeks on a pension then maybe we'd better check their luggage as they are probably grey mule nomads.

Comment 31 of 114

john of whitsunday Posted at 8:18 AM March 28, 2010

the pension here is poverty line living and the rules mean you can have virtually no assets for a rainy day. No wonder they go overseas just like thousands of age pensioners.Has the government worked out how much they save when these pensioners are not here claiming medical benefits and free train trips? This penny pinching government should get a life and leave the pensioners alone.

Comment 32 of 114

dazza Posted at 8:19 AM March 28, 2010

if you can live on the pension good luck because by the time you pay rent there is nothing left,plus you have to pay medical bills food fuel,yet boat people can walk into the country and get well looked after shopping sprees everyting,where is the help for people of australia who have payed there taxes they get nothing,so why not look after our own first

Comment 33 of 114

p davis Posted at 8:30 AM March 28, 2010

Thanks to Mr Rudd we have another bus load of illegal people in NSW yesterday. So maybe he doesn't care how many pensioners go overseas it makes more room for the boat people. They will come back one day and they will have settled in their empty homes. I presume also they will go straight on the unemployment benefits and open up a take away shop and be millionaires in a year.

Comment 34 of 114

Irish of brisbane Posted at 8:39 AM March 28, 2010

If these people are really disabled and they can have a better life on \$700.00 a fortnight than they could have here, then why worry about it? Most have worked and paid tax, they are Australian citizens and if they are entitled to their pension, does it really matter where they spend it? Their life style is up to them, as it is up to all of us. If they are having a better life overseas, instead of eking out their money here, then good luck to them.

Comment 35 of 114

tanya twible of brisbane Posted at 8:53 AM March 28, 2010

living in those countries is so cheap for the pensioners and that includes the retired . Our cost of living here is really high so for those people on disability pension or old age pension living is a real big struggle . i see nothing wrong with it . why would i want to see people on a disability and old age pension suffer .i see nothing wrong with this at all

Comment 36 of 114

Will Posted at 9:01 AM March 28, 2010

Don't blame them. In Thailand you can live on \$700 per f/n, in Australia you have no hope.

Comment 37 of 114

Kim Posted at 9:03 AM March 28, 2010

I'm on disability and DON'T receive over \$700 a fortnight so how come these people are? With increased medical costs (as not everything is covered by medicare or reduced billing) the extra \$60 a fortnight people received on disability pension has been eaten up. If these people are genuinely disabled and are living a better life on the Aussie pension overseas, I might join them.

Comment 38 of 114

Meg Posted at 9:13 AM March 28, 2010

Good luck to them. Being ill and struggling on a pension in this country is not easy. With the high cost of living and a non-existent public hospital system who could blame them for wanting better?

Comment 39 of 114

Ian Modjo of Indonesia Posted at 9:19 AM March 28, 2010
So??

Comment 40 of 114

truckle the uncivil Posted at 9:35 AM March 28, 2010

I am a disability pensioner and if I didn't have kids or require constant medical attention, I might do the same. It is no easy (I find it impossible) to live on a disability pension. Because of medical conditions I need higher quality, more expensive food, I have travel expenses to medical attendances. Some people might be rorting the system but others would be just trying to make the best of things.

Comment 41 of 114

R. Mason of Newcastle Posted at 9:37 AM March 28, 2010

Sign me up for adisability support pension, I could do with a cheap holiday.

Comment 42 of 114

who the Posted at 9:46 AM March 28, 2010

what a great idea think I will do the same at least I can afford a decent life style and why does it matter where dsp people live ifthey are overseas then public housing and health are all better off. I think this is just"oh look at that, those nasty pensioners are getting by living overseas...ooo we cant have that....WHY NOT...its not like they are taking anything they are not entitled to..so what loophole are they going to close.....access to a better lifestyle with the same money...what a bunch of sour pusses

Comment 43 of 114

Philip Robinson of North Of Brisbane Posted at 9:48 AM March 28, 2010

Comment p davis Posted at 11:00 PM March 27, 2010 , im sure their counting the Recent Pension increase from March 2010 for the \$700.00 mentioned . I'd say living here for say 2 Months or less per year , Cut their Pension , Simple..

Comment 44 of 114

Stan of Morayfield,4506 Posted at 9:57 AM March 28, 2010

I remember about ten or so years ago reading in the papers that elderly Japanese where being sent to Australia to places in retirement homes. Obviously it was so much cheaper to send the oldies here than keep them there. Equally, some institutions where making a quid out of the business. Now we have the reverse our oldies (& perhaps not so oldies) are returning to the birth place (probably) of their spouses. This has been going on for donkeys years & it makes an absolute nonsense of Rudd's largess to such people with His billions of give away money. How many native born Greeks are living back "home" especially now as the Drachma has the value of about wall paper, who are there because of friendly doctors. What is the remedy, do we insist anyone on any type of state funded pension cannot leave the country? Would that be right, to stay here perhaps renting a home that leaves you almost destitute. Live in your carers home land very well on the same pension or should we say pick your spot sport & if its abroad you get the going rate. That though would have the smack of discrimination, wouldn't it?

Comment 45 of 114

chegazza of brissy Posted at 10:01 AM March 28, 2010
great idea leave them alone, and tackle scumbag polities.

Comment 46 of 114

sick and sick of it of brisbane Posted at 10:03 AM March 28, 2010
If i could afford the airfares I'd do it too. I've been genuinely ill for my entire adult life and, despite massive efforts to gain qualifications, have experienced so much discrimination in the workplace that I've been forced to live on the way less than poverty level disability pension my whole life. I never go anywhere or do anything and have to budget every cent just to survive. Don't judge us if you haven't been there, living on welfare in this country is a half-life, lonely and demeaning with everyone looking down their well-heeled noses at you.

Comment 47 of 114

Jo of Qld Posted at 10:16 AM March 28, 2010
What?? My husband is on a disability pension (\$500 per fortnight, although it would be more for a single) and there's no way we can afford to travel even interstate, let alone overseas! If there's a loophole we can use, I'd certainly like to know about it :)

Comment 48 of 114

Amazed of Cairns Posted at 10:22 AM March 28, 2010
In some cases their only disability is that they wouldn't work in an iron lung.

Comment 49 of 114

Colin Piper of QLD Posted at 11:07 AM March 28, 2010
I agree with the comments of "Don't really blame them" as I know of a couple of men who through ill health will never work again, and who live in the Philippines with at least some element of pride, as at least they can afford some basic necessities of everyday life there. Try living in Brisbane on \$700 a fortnight and see how long you critics last. It's easy when you are working, earning an income to be critical of those more unfortunate, they are not all bludgers but have genuine problems. That's what welfare is all about, if you don't like supporting it then YOU go and live somewhere like the Philippines where if you are too poor and get sick, for your family it's cheaper to die. Also \$700 a fortnight is not a small fortune in the Philippines as you live every day with the vagaries of the value of the dollar, currently up, but has been known to be 30% below what it is currently.

Comment 50 of 114

v wutz Posted at 11:08 AM March 28, 2010
to couriermail you are giving disabled persons a bad name can you get me 700 dollars a fortnight i only get 505 dollars by the way i have ms using a wheelchair
veronika w

Comment 51 of 114

Argh! of Melbourne Posted at 11:15 AM March 28, 2010

this is complete sensationalist fodder and the accusations are shameful. I know many people on disability pensions and it isn't a holiday, being unable to work is difficult enough, and you are consistently scrutinised about your disability in order to receive anything in the first place, and there is no real support out there except them throwing money at you every fortnight. i think it's disgusting that you are putting even more pressure on them via singling them out to the public. not everyone is a cheater.

Comment 52 of 114

TurnOffTheTap of SEQ Posted at 11:16 AM March 28, 2010

I'm tired of supporting parasites! I've worked all my life and can't afford to travel overseas several times a year. If they can afford that then they don't need welfare.

Comment 53 of 114

Pondering Posted at 11:37 AM March 28, 2010

I don't know how these people do it. I certainly couldn't afford to do it, and for me it is just a case of hand to mouth, each fortnight. Don't label us all in the one mold.

Comment 54 of 114

brian allsop Posted at 11:38 AM March 28, 2010

That is the typical sensation grabbing headline. Consider the cost of living in Australia and maybe the secure option so they can eat and live a modest lifestyle is for them to live overseas. I lost everything in the gfc and when I got unemployment benefits I found I was not able to afford to live, no car, medical costs and basically living on the street. However, given the grace of Asian friends I was invited back here and live on about AUD30 I get from teaching english. As soon as I stepped onto the plane the Dept of Immigration informed Centrelink and they stopped my benefit, bless their hearts. So sitting in a chair in some Government office with the social vision of a newt or at a journalists desk looking to impress the editor, who could give a bugger about those of us that have worked our guts out and been forced to live like this. But thats Australia, live in dream land, "think about myself" and continue to be selfish, export the jobs and have no vision. A great venue for refugees but not typical bushman Aussies.

Comment 55 of 114

wild child of Perth Posted at 11:44 AM March 28, 2010

What? So the penny has finally dropped! Those highly paid imbeciles who run this country have known about this for years and years.

Comment 56 of 114

Bill Smith of Brisbane Posted at 12:01 PM March 28, 2010

I would leave the poor buggers in peace. They are already afflicted enough as it is. All that flying to and fro at least every 13 weeks is a great hardship in itself. The countries you have mentioned abound in domestic rats everywhere; just to mention one minus item. So you can say they are forced to this lifestyle.

Comment 57 of 114

Discom Bob Ulated of QLD Posted at 12:12 PM March 28, 2010

If they're entitled to their pensions, the "costing taxpayers \$3 million a year" will still be costing taxpayers \$3 million a year, no matter where they live. Leave them alone you selfish pigs, they are disabled, didn't you hear?

Comment 58 of 114

Kim De Marco of Brisbane Posted at 12:15 PM March 28, 2010

Is it not better to have health than to rely on the pension. Good on these people who can live a more normal life in a foreign country than what they can here in Aus. I would hate to be living here on the disability pension. Does it really matter where pensioners live. Go for it and enjoy your lives .

Comment 59 of 114

Not Happy of brisbane Posted at 12:18 PM March 28, 2010

Why should government begrudge them for finding cheaper alternative residence. At least they don't bitch about for bigger pension and are creative in finding ways to live within that allowance. Have they ever ask themselves to try living in Oz with that amount. Of course whether they are bona fide disabled is another issue.

Comment 60 of 114

Rambo of QLD Posted at 12:48 PM March 28, 2010

If this loop hole exists what about the honest pensioners who want a better lifestyle when they get older and can only have one by living part or all of the year overseas. This government unfortunately is only considering the current taxpayer and not the ones who have paid their taxes all their lives only to find they can not have a choice as they get older. Freedom of choice is being taken from them. I can only see further drain on resources here as everyone stays in Australia as BIG Brother is watching YOU!

Comment 61 of 114

h of b Posted at 12:59 PM March 28, 2010

Comment 3 - if they were genuinely disabled, would they be able to sit on a plane for hours at a time? If they can do that, why can't they sit at a computer and input data? There are thousands of jobs they could do. The disability pension is a huge rort.

Comment 62 of 114

BundyGil of Bundaberg Posted at 1:03 PM March 28, 2010

What a load of crap as usual from news limited newspapers. 154 disability pensioner out of around a million. Wow! I bet there's 20,000 aged pensioners doing the same. Picking on the disadvantaged is a news limited speciality. Shame, news limited!

Comment 63 of 114

h of b Posted at 1:06 PM March 28, 2010

The people who should be most angry are the genuine disability pensioners - ones who are genuinely in pain every day - the last thing they would ever consider is going on a flight. The scammers make it harder for the genuinely disabled.

Comment 64 of 114

RJP Posted at 1:08 PM March 28, 2010

The people I know on these pensions don't get \$700.00 a fortnight!! They are struggling, often living in sub-standard accomodation and only having one small meal of stew or a plate of veges a day..if they're lucky..many can only afford to buy cheap meat (usually asking the butcher for offcuts for their alleged "pet")...yet we have guests of our Majesty's service better cared for than this, then there are the centrelink seekers wrongly referred to as asylum seekers who are living in 5 star hotels and get all their medical, dental, rent subsidies, free or discounted clothing...and most of our genuine disabled and their carers paid taxes all their life, many genuine disabled are returned service personel...kinda sucks when those who are against us are now holding out their hands for our welfare and will not hesitate to bite that very hand when it suits them...Yes, I am referring to crims AND centrelink seekers....

Comment 65 of 114

Graeme Henderson of Tara Posted at 1:19 PM March 28, 2010

If you are going to restrict the disabled then you must restrict everyone or else it is discrimination. Once you are permanently declared disabled what are you supposed to do, you have a duty to make the best of your situation for your own purposes. Are they going to stop the disabled travelling? Is Jenny Macklin saying that they are second class citizens? Are they to be put under house arrest? Pay them a decent amount and leave them alone, they are not here for centrelink staff to harass, that is what the unemployed are for.

Comment 66 of 114

j campbell of Elizabeth SA Posted at 1:24 PM March 28, 2010

The rules are getting more strict. I have a heart condition and when I applied for the pension I was told if I could walk in and ask for an application form I could get a job. I wasnt even given the courtesy of being able to apply. I am still in the work force and that is what I prefer.

Comment 67 of 114

rodney allsworth of morayfield Posted at 1:24 PM March 28, 2010

there is another side to this issue, if these reciepients are still within the law as it stands, there is nothing that they can be accused of, if ctr/lnk is not prepared to work with govts and change the laws under which these people are recieving the pension. they simply cannot complain, if they are breaking the law, penalize them, still if ctr/lnk thinks its an immoral missuse of taxpayers moneys, get a life, do you think they are the greatest offenders, ms macklin ought to start checking some of the local wealthy who need to have their earnings checked,against their welfare. rod qld

Comment 68 of 114

Medusa Knows of Banana Republic Posted at 1:36 PM March 28, 2010
Costing taxpayers \$3 million a year? Pales in significance when compared to pink batts, BER COLA's, Defense dept. flight costs ... and the list goes on. If they're entitled to a DSP then who cares where they live? The cost of living in Australia is OTT.

Comment 69 of 114

Peter of Brisbane Posted at 1:37 PM March 28, 2010
They join the 1000+ boat people that are bludging on the Australian people.

Comment 70 of 114

muzza of albania Posted at 1:48 PM March 28, 2010
wish i knew you could you could do that, would be better off now. leave it alone , but then i might come back as a boat person and get more and havent paid any tax.

Comment 71 of 114

Bob of Brisbane Posted at 2:45 PM March 28, 2010
I am a Veterans Affairs TPI pensioner, and am very grateful for that. I believe that disability pensioners should remain living and spending their pension with in Australia. Should they choose to live overseas Then the pension should be suspended or cancelled. The money they recieve should for the most part be used here in Australia.

Comment 72 of 114

Julian of Adelaide Posted at 2:57 PM March 28, 2010
Jet setting on \$350 a week? Will they let me go if I get the bus? Less than 800 people singled out of 1.2 million pensioners, and no real savings anyway. Ok, pensioners, you know how to vote this year, the States' already gave the message to these "pretend Socialists".

Comment 73 of 114

RW Posted at 3:20 PM March 28, 2010
Yeh, I'm thinking of spending time between here and Indonesia. Hasn't Australia done enough to help all and sundry, at the high cost to ordinary Australians who have paid tax all their working life? Guess the pensioners can live on bread and water with the cost of living in Australia.

Comment 74 of 114

A. Boyd of Hobart Posted at 3:24 PM March 28, 2010
If they are genuinely disabled, they are saving the government a lot of money in housing, health and nursing costs. Why should we object?

Comment 75 of 114

charles gillings of qld Posted at 3:34 PM March 28, 2010
the story mentioned that they were offenders why? they havent broken any law infact they are

sticking to the law by coming back to australia every 13 weeks, i cant see a problem if they want to live somewhere where the cost of living is cheaper. good on them.

Comment 76 of 114

D Dronning Posted at 3:36 PM March 28, 2010

It may be a loop hole but the DSP who live overseas frees up accommodation for the ones who are waiting 7 years for public housing. Also if you are overseas you do not qualify for the Pharmaceutical Allowance of \$3- each for couples per fortnight and \$6- for singles.

Comment 77 of 114

shaneomight Posted at 3:44 PM March 28, 2010

Yes I'm sure they'll close the loop hole, for future pension recipients. Labour is only correcting it's under the table policy decisions of the 90's to throw a whole heap of long term unemployed onto a pension to cook the books so to speak. I've seen some of the (Australian Residents pfft) who reside in these developing countries, leave them there where better off!

Comment 78 of 114

Kevin from Booyal of Booyal Posted at 3:52 PM March 28, 2010

What about old aged pensioners? At least we can prove that they are genuine. I do not mind what a disabled pensioners does with his pension as long as he is a genuine claimant. It just seems to me that there are too many kind doctors and too few follow up checks to verify the bona fides of each recipient. Are we talking about permanent disabled or are we talking about those who are disabled until it is found out that they are able bodied? We need a disabled pensioner check up every 13 weeks by an independent government appointed doctor. I called social security about a neighbour who I believe and am convinced is rorting the system from my mobile to the hotline number and asked them to ring me back because I was calling from a mobile and they said they could not. To my mind, my neighbour has got away with it and will continue to get away with it.

Comment 79 of 114

whtetiger Posted at 4:04 PM March 28, 2010

After I pay my rent,(admittedly low rent) plus put money towards my electricity and phone bills I am left with the grand total of \$517 per fortnight. I am expecting a letter from the housing dept telling me my rent has increased because we just received an increase of \$29 a f/n in our aged pensions. Couple that increase with the one Kevin Rudd gave us last year I have the feeling I am not going to be any better off than I was two years ago. I haven't worked it out yet but anyone in public housing pays a flat rate of 25% of all money going into your bank account and don't for one minute think they (centerlink) don't know to the last cent how much you have in the bank. Don't get me wrong I am grateful for what I get but it is hard to live on it and yes you don't really live you merely exist and get by.

Comment 80 of 114

And the problem is? of Adelaide Posted at 4:22 PM March 28, 2010

Good on them I say! It is more often the case that people reliant on Centrelink benefits are

unable to afford to travel overseas. They are merely using the funds allocated to them to the best of their advantage.

Comment 81 of 114

Peter Schmidt of Tanah Merah Posted at 4:26 PM March 28, 2010

Well said comment 5. If they are legally allowed to receive the pension, why not. The rich exploit every loophole as well, doesn't it? While they are overseas they do not clog up our miserable dental and hospital system. Good on them, at least they have some life.

Comment 82 of 114

peter hurford of Federal seat of wannon ! Posted at 4:29 PM March 28, 2010

How did they get past the centre link interrogation and checking in the first place? how dare they show that much cheek and rot the system !!!sounds like perk to me !

Comment 83 of 114

TrueBlue Posted at 4:42 PM March 28, 2010

What a lot of crap, you worked all your life, you deserve your pension. Where you spend it it's up to you!

Comment 84 of 114

Paul of Redcliffe Posted at 4:43 PM March 28, 2010

\$700 a fortnight is no small fortune in any country now. How long is it since you've been to Thailand Simon? It is nowhere near as cheap as it was only a few years ago. In our globalising world the difference in the cost of living between countries is shrinking all the time, don't believe me just google the price of apartments in Armenia or the Ukraine. But at least in Thailand you could live ok on it. Nobody could live at a reasonable standard on \$700 a fortnight in Australia, so they are doing the right thing.

Comment 85 of 114

Christine of W. A Posted at 4:55 PM March 28, 2010

i think its a great idea, i am on a fortnightly pension i pay \$390 in rent which leaves me not much for food , petrol on the rise again ect, i do two days volunteer work for the community, but i travel 20ks on those two days which puts a dent on my fuel bill, its cheaper to live in Asian countries for food ect, i would love a bit of pampering

Comment 86 of 114

Get the pigs out of the trough..... of bananaland Posted at 4:56 PM March 28, 2010

Agree with post@ 11.25pm. Hardy a fortune, if they're genuine, who cares where they live. I guess the money goes a lot further in Asia. Let's compare what they cost, with what all our ex PM's and Pollies are costing per month, and many of these Pollies are still working in one field or another, earning big money. Do more stories exposing the cost of their 'privileges'.

Comment 87 of 114

harry thomas of sydney Posted at 5:32 PM March 28, 2010

i don't think people living on a disability support pension have a real choice. this is a great idea. i struggle on what i earn in a job, and my pay is not too bad (apparently). overall a stupid story targeting the financially vulnerable.

Comment 88 of 114

(gang)Green with Envy of Brisbane Posted at 5:33 PM March 28, 2010

How dare those pensioners on the disability allowance have an enjoyable life overseas. They should be made to stay in Australia & get ripped off by the banks, oil cos. & the food supermarkets. They're probably laughing all the way to & from the bank too? Up the A\$!!!

Comment 89 of 114

bob Posted at 5:36 PM March 28, 2010

Can persons fly for example 9hrs that are on a disability pension with out a doctors approval or travel insurance? If not make it happen.

Comment 90 of 114

Cut the thieves off Posted at 5:59 PM March 28, 2010

Sorry, the cash is so they can live in Australia, paid for by Australians. Where will they go when they get sick...oh that's right to get subsidised medicine and hospital treatment in Australia. If they can afford to pay for flights overseas, then they are obviously getting paid too much.

Comment 91 of 114

T-Man of Brisbane Posted at 7:36 PM March 28, 2010

instead of looking into the disability pension, lets look into some of the polities pensions. I'm sure we could save a lot more than \$3 million.

Comment 92 of 114

Just West Posted at 7:45 PM March 28, 2010

I wonder just how many of these disabled people are traveling with relatives? Or are members of a family who work overseas. If I were to travel, I would be taking both my disabled girls with me. Both are on disability pensions. There is no way I would be putting them into some alternative repite facility, if there was one that would care for them for more than 2 weeks at a time. Services are not available to support the disabled for extended periods, even finding full time care or group homes are limited. To change this 'loophole' and make it harder for families who continue to care for their disabled adult family members and would just add additional burdern to the families, and in the long run to the community as the cost of alternative care fare out weighs the cost of caring for a disabled member of our society when the family continues to care for their relative or disabled friend.

Comment 93 of 114

Peter of Brissie Posted at 8:29 PM March 28, 2010

I have investigated these rorts and nothing was done. The Labor voters come from these demographics and they are protected species. Simple as that.

Comment 94 of 114

Chris Ryan of Gympie Posted at 8:52 PM March 28, 2010

While these "highly paid pensioners" are travelling overseas could they have a look around for ideas to help us here in Australia. We pay our politicians an exorbitant wage to fail to do this so let these people have a go.

Comment 95 of 114

disapaussie Posted at 9:11 PM March 28, 2010

the ?journalist who wrote this article wants to get promotion or cushy job in gov. Well done but move yourself around to see the world you see how much everything costs. What you describe is like sitting out jail sentence. Even you are disabled now because of the fault of your employer we never should think life is beautiful or worth looking at. In EU this day you can be in any country and none of the department wants to know where you are, and in Australia you only in a flight 1 hour from Aussie destination and Immigration + all Social services are informed. Which means Australia = Alcatraz (modern paradise)

Comment 96 of 114

Peter of Brissie Posted at 9:16 PM March 28, 2010

Can't see what the problem is - what's wrong with making the best of a bad situation? If you're lucky and smart enough to make the most out of what money you have - good luck to you! Anyway, since when was the sentence for having a disability home detention?

Comment 97 of 114

Blind Freddy of Logan Posted at 9:17 PM March 28, 2010

As long as it is a legitimate disability, I have no problem where they live frankly. If they are entitled to it as an Aussie citizen, I have no issue with it. If they are not really disabled and are rorting the system... that is a different story.

Comment 98 of 114

Tom of Cairns Posted at 9:19 PM March 28, 2010

British age pensioners do not get their age pensions indexed to CPI in Australia (what you first get is all you will ever get in UK pounds). One of the arguments given by the UK government for this is that the pensions are not spent in the UK and contribute nothing to that economy. Same could be said here.

Comment 99 of 114

Mark Le Blanc of Adelaide Posted at 7:29 PM March 29, 2010

Well having lived overseas and found that \$150 a week can give you a house and food and clothing, its no surprise that Australia's poor (pensioners and disabled) get on \$800 return flights 4 times a year and actually save money overseas whilst those who live here full time

live in abject poverty. If they dont have a house here its entirely understandable and may give them a quality of life they would not have here. After all who is going to give a disabled person a job?

Comment 100 of 114

Brett on DSP of South East Asia Posted at 10:54 PM March 29, 2010

I am one of the guilty ones. Having a genetic illness that has made me incapable of work and after many years of being an honest taxpayer I am now being forced to live on the DSP. I do not get the claimed \$700/fn as quoted. I am one of the eight people that spent less then 1 week in Australia last year though. Why not? My pension can not give me any quality of life in Australia and reduces me to standards not fit for a prisoner. When in South East Asia I can provide for myself and my child (which centrelink does NOT pay me anything for) and enjoy life as we only have the one. My son (and daughter on the way) will be future tax payers for Australia (again I wont be getting the baby bonus.) When in Australia my medical expenses can balloon costing the government far more than the pittance that the DSP actually is so I would think it is in their best interest that I travel about. Not doing anything wrong in my opinion. Just trying to get by and be a good father!

Comment 101 of 114

George Overseas of Overseas Posted at 3:12 PM March 30, 2010

I paid my tax in Australia for some 50 years, I am over 70 years old and do not qualify for any benefit from Australia, because I am a "non resident," I have very little money and survive on my wits and little else. I am able to live reasonably well here, overseas, on less than \$120 a week. If I was in Australia, I would be a "burden" to the "poor" Australian Government because of medical costs and more. I do not know of any other government, world wide, who are as miserable as the Australian Government. Anybody of my age who is living in Australia would often be a bigger burden to the Australian Government because of the medical costs, rent assistance and a lot more. Yet when he is living overseas they are afraid to give him any benefits because he might not spend it all in Australia. I can apparently go back and live in Australia, but I cannot get the full benefits for some 2 years and then I am not allowed to leave for a period, I can never leave for more than 3 months at a time. Please donâ??t ever think that you are living in a â??luckyâ? country, it is a beautiful place, spoiled by Government stupidity. Regards from, a â??non resident."

Comment 102 of 114

LoveLos of northern rivers Posted at 11:44 AM April 01, 2010

I have just returned from Thailand. The fare was an internet special i got and booked 8 months in advance,...it was \$200 all up return,...thats right \$200 . These super cheap flights are there if you watch and wait. Whilst in Thailand i can get massage and treatment for my back at around \$3 -\$5 an hour. In Australia its \$50-\$60 an hour. So i can get treatment everyday plus eat for \$1-\$2 a meal, have someone do my laundry and basically have all my needs met for very cheap leaving me feeling less stressed and more relaxed. At home i cant afford a massage, or to see a movie and i never eat out. It is so much more affordable over there and i can go to a pharmacy and buy my medication over the counter without having to wait in a doctors office long after my appointment was made . I go once a year for 3 months and if i could afford to go for longer i would, could it really is a better quality of life for me.

Comment 103 of 114

Thomas of overseas Posted at 11:58 AM April 01, 2010

I am on a disability pension due to a spinal problem, I didn't want to be on a pension but when people find out you have a disability they won't employ you, I was on \$1000/week, went to Commonwealth rehabilitation services to help me get back into the work force and they actually arranged for the DSP because I couldn't work without very strong medication, my income dropped to about \$260/week, If you are honest and tell prospective employers you have a back injury they won't touch you, if you hide the fact and injure yourself more you get no compensation at all and lose your job for not informing them, I spend 3 months in Cebu where the temp is about 30 deg 24/7, return to Aust. for about 1 month then return to Cebu, I live alone can live a better life on the pension in Cebu than I could in Australia, There would be far more people rorting the "unemployment" & aged payments than the DSP payments, don't be selective stop the rich aged pensioners who hide their money in family trusts, I started with nothing and have most of it left.

Comment 104 of 114

Thomas of overseas Posted at 12:58 PM April 01, 2010

The Crudd government can let illegal immigrants (possible terrorists) who pay thousands of dollars to get here, pay them more than the DSP so they send money back to their own countries to help bring more of their families into Australia with Rudds blessings. BUT they can't leave our own pensioners alone to enjoy life a bit better.. I can see a class action discrimination case coming on by the people on DSP

Comment 105 of 114

Elizabeth Riada of NSW Posted at 2:05 PM April 01, 2010

For each refugee that cue jumps here by boat add 6/7 persons (their partners/wives/siblings or children waiting for them to get on DSP and then apply for them to come in) I worked overseas with refugee settlement and they are for the most part laughing their heads off at the stupidity of our goveronment "with rose tinted glasses". If (DSP in particular) ceased 90% of asylum seekers would not come here (their admission on acceptance of Australian/NZ citizenship). Penny for our thoughts.

Comment 106 of 114

Sharyn Posted at 2:57 PM April 01, 2010

Curious as to why the article is making it sound like \$700 a fortnight is actually enough to live off in the first place. That barely covers rent. I think those getting worked up about this do their sums. It actually would save the Aussie govt and tax payers money for not having to pay for medical care and medications on the PBS. There's never just one side to these stories. The pension rate is NOT enough to live off here in Australia. And people should remember a lot of these people claiming these payments have been tax payers for many many years themselves. But then again, to understand, I guess you would have to walk a mile...

Comment 107 of 114

Joanne of Sydney Posted at 8:25 AM April 05, 2010

I am an immigrant, permanent resident, have worked and paid Taxes sine I was 2 weeksd into

this country. I angers me,I work hard,cannot afford a home, but cant get assistance to rental subsidy. A LOT of people collecting centrelink spend 6 months or more overseas, they dont pay taxes (cash economy) and they are in HComm housing. If you come here they should not be able to have dual passports, you want to be here all the time and have access to centrelink or you dont? You cant be classed as permanent resident unless you are here PERMANENTLY.

Comment 108 of 114

paddy ohalloran of UK Posted at 4:39 PM April 06, 2010

I am a Brit ---I have witnessed those australians living in PAttaya on disability pensions .several have good business's out in the beach areas and in the cities running bars restaurants and B&B houses they openly brag about how they con the aussie government back home faking bad backs and such like whilst living great life styles .the 700 is peanuts compared to what they make, thats only the tip of the iceberge

Comment 109 of 114

Ron of Brisbane Posted at 3:17 PM April 08, 2010

Can Paddy (post 109)please supply details of these people to centrelink or is this just another urban myth?

Comment 110 of 114

Ron of Brisbane Posted at 3:24 PM April 08, 2010

Will Joanne of Sydney(post 108)have dual passports once she becomes a citizen?I believe so.What makes you think these people live in Hcomm housing and have dual passports?They are supposed to be spending most of their time overseas and maybe they are actually citizens of Australia and born here.

Comment 111 of 114

David of Newcastle Posted at 3:51 PM April 08, 2010

In reply to Paddy OHalloran of UK (6 april)Can you please forward details to centrelink so they can follow up on these cases of fraud? I am guessing you have no details and yours is just a yarn heard on a barstool in the walking street.

Comment 112 of 114

Andrew Jones of Sydney Posted at 4:33 PM April 15, 2010

Anyone who suggests the DSP is a realistic amount to live on in Australia is simply wrong. Please also consider that the financial impact of these people on Social Security would be greatly reduced if they were to spend most of their time overseas. Take my case for example; I currently receive a total of \$505.00 a week and have put my name down for a housing commission house. However if I spend most of my time overseas, not only will my lifestyle be much improved.....it will also reduce my claim to about \$250.00 a week! (This is my basic DSP Pension amount.) The way I see it there are 3 issues here, one; is that Centrelink determines if people are elligible for DSP, two; is that in most cases allowing DSP recipients to spend most of their time abroad will allow them a much improved quality of life, and

three; that the financial impact on Social Security would be decreased greatly if DSP recipients are allowed to spend most of their time abroad.

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Clinton Gray of Perth Posted at 5:26 PM June 22, 2010

Let's do some maths: Swap the >\$2500 per year DSP Rent Assistance offers for the opportunity to pay rent in Asia. One year rent in Thailand = one fortnight rent in Australia. Let the pensioners go and NOT have to return each 13 weeks - the savings in Rent Assistance alone would be enormous! As a pensioner, the idea of selling my medicines to complement this 'rort' is atrocious - some people obviously have no idea what pain and disability is. The standard of living for someone on DSP is appalling in Australia and quite frankly, fantastic in SE Asia. I dare any journalist to find a Australia-rent-paying pensioner with a genuine disability who has a life.

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