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Caring for British Pensioners in Australia

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20th May 2024

Dr Shannon Torrens
Inquiry Secretary, Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Department of the House of Representatives
PO Box 6021 Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Dr Torrens,

Protocol on the Accession of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and associated side-letters.

British Pensions in Australia Inc. (BPiA) welcome this opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.

BPiA is a registered charity that cares for British pensioners and their families and dependents living in Australia. This includes Australian residents who will receive a British state pension in due course but have not yet reached state pension age. There are over 200,000 Australian residents currently receiving a state pension and an unknown number who are potential state pension recipients.

We believe that the inclusion of the United Kingdom as a party to the CPTPP is inappropriate. This is not based on geography but on the continuing discrimination by the United Kingdom in the way it freezes the age pension it pays to residents of the other countries within the CPTPP.

The freezing of state pensions paid to residents of countries within the CPTPP contrasts with the treatment of pensioners living in countries outside the CPTPP. The United Kingdom cannot justify freezing pensions paid to residents of Canada when pensions paid to pensioners in the United States of America are not frozen. Similarly, residents of Singapore have their state pensions frozen whilst the pensions paid to residents of the Philippines are not frozen. State pensions paid to residents of Vietnam are frozen whilst those paid to residents of Turkey are not frozen. And, of course, this discrimination affects the people of Australia whose only wrongdoing is that they have contributed to the economy of the United Kingdom and have chosen to live in Australia, or they have returned to Australia after working in the United Kingdom.

This irrational discrimination is prejudicial to the objectives of the CPTPP. Specifically, the frozen pensions policy of the United Kingdom fails on the social benefits it brings to the citizens of member countries, it does not contribute to raising living standards (rather it does the opposite) and it certainly does not reduce poverty.

BPiA is aware that the richer countries who are parties to the CPTPP can provide support for affected people in their country, but this is not the case for the citizens of the countries who are poorer parties to CPTPP. Their citizens who are recipients of a British state pension are left in poverty solely because of where they live.

We point out to the Joint Standing Committee that the United Kingdom is the only party to the CPTPP to discriminate against the residents of other countries within the CPTPP in the way it sets the rate of state age pension.



BPiA takes this opportunity to remind the Joint Standing Committee that the Preamble to the Treaty states that the purpose of the Treaty is to:

ESTABLISH a comprehensive regional agreement that promotes economic integration to liberalise trade and investment, bring economic growth and social benefits, create new opportunities for workers and businesses, contribute to raising living standards, benefit consumers, reduce poverty and promote sustainable growth;

STRENGTHEN the bonds of friendship and cooperation between them and their peoples;

PROTECT and enforce labour rights, improve working conditions and living standards, strengthen cooperation and the Parties' capacity on labour issues;

These noble sentiments are not matched by the actions of the United Kingdom. We believe it is timely and appropriate for parties to the Treaty to make this dissatisfaction known to the Government of the United Kingdom.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Patrick Edwards.

Patrick Edwards