

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2017-18 Budget Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 1.6 Income Support for Seniors

Question No: SQ17-000356

Topic: Pension Eligibility

Hansard page: 124

Senator Murray Watt asked:

In terms of indigeneity, at the moment for certain payments there are lower age thresholds for Aboriginal people. How will the change in the Age Pension eligibility affect these people?

Answer:

Age Pension qualification rules are consistent across all population groups, including for Indigenous Australians. There are no social security payments with different age eligibility requirements for Indigenous Australians. However, ABSTUDY is a payment specifically for people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Legislation was passed in 2009 to change the qualifying age for the Age Pension from 65 to 67 years. These changes mean that the Age Pension qualification age will begin to rise gradually by six months every two years from 1 July 2017, reaching 67 years by 1 July 2023. These changes will affect those Australians born on or after 1 July 1952, including Indigenous Australians.

Subject to the passage of legislation, the Age Pension qualifying age will increase further by six months every two years from 1 July 2025, reaching 70 years by 1 July 2035. This further change to the Age Pension qualifying age would affect Australians born on or after 1 July 1958, including Indigenous Australians.

All Australians, including Indigenous Australians, who cannot support themselves through paid work have access to Australia's social security safety net. People aged under the Age Pension qualifying age can access payments such as Newstart Allowance and the Disability Support Pension, subject to meeting relevant eligibility criteria.