

Dear Chairperson & Committee Members:

Forgive me for beginning on a negative but I really do not expect any good to come out of your investigations into living pressures on older Australians. Why? Because you Politicians are too far removed from ordinary decent struggling, especially older, Australians before I get into this submission I would like to suggest that you members try – even if only on paper – too live comfortably on the lousy aged pension of approx \$219. And this lousy pension to those who built this country and whose country is now experiencing a boom with enormous budget surpluses ensuring massive pay rises for all you members but none for us at all. I discount the once only \$500 grant which I see only as a bribe to vote for Howard who, as you know, has received a \$20,000 pay increase which is more than I get in a year – a fair country- Oh yes!!

a) The Cost of Living Pressures

(i) When one receives only the aged pension and knowing that this well paid committee is fully aware of the rate of our aged pension this question can be seen as an obscene one. But of course the price of fuel takes a huge lump from our money but one just travels less. We have to purchase fuel also for lawn mowers and even a chain saw. Cannot afford to pay to get this work done and in passing the majority of our grass is on the Council nature strip. The cost of fuel of course adds to the cost of all other things as you well know. Food prices up but maybe it's the drought and "perhaps?" they will fall eventually

(ii) The cost of electricity is to rise and gas seems to always rise and not too far back the price of a gas cylinder – we have a gas stove – suddenly went up by between \$30-40. The reason was that suddenly all the companies – collusion who knows – charged for looking after or maintenance on the gas cylinders now that was a large jump. I did write to the Minister but got lobbed off as usual there are very few decent caring politicians who actually answer their mail normally it is just an underling with a form letter. Yes we get a telephone, power and rate discounts which help a little but of course a little less these days but it is something.

(iii) After the mean spirited Government cancelled the aged dental scheme and in a time of record surpluses which stinks but maybe this cancellation paid for Kirmibilli (Sorry to get political and personal but I just do not understand this government's mean spirited thinking – again you live in a different world entirely) We, my wife who is in her mid-sixties and myself who will be 73 this August pay the normal expensive rate for dental work which we must save for. One because of this mean spirited government and more importantly we try very hard to remain as healthy as we can and we consider dental health very important. But to be able to claim our dental work on Medi-bank would be wonderful. As well we attend at normal cost a naturopath and this is expensive but like our dental we see it as important again to be able to claim on Medi-bank would be a great help.

b) The Impact of These Cost Pressures on Living Standards:

Another somewhat ridiculous question if I may say as the question and answer is self evident well it is for those of us on a meagre miserable aged pension perhaps you on a \$1000+ perks a week see it differently. But of course the lack of funds inhibit us to participate in our community as there are so many things which us ignored wrinklies cannot do because of the lack of free money. Even fire wood goes up every year – we have a slow combustion stove but we cannot afford to have it burning as much as we would like. This week especially it has been freezing here in south east Queensland yet we must be careful with our depleted wood supply – again this would not enter into your other-world minds eh?

c) The Impact of These Cost Pressures on Older Australians and Their Families etc:

We do not have g/children to look after but we do have living with us and are looking after a 94 year old mother. I reiterate that my wife is in her mid-sixties and I am 73 this year for this the only assistance we get is a woman who cleans the mother's rooms once a fortnight. We do a meals on wheels run once sometimes twice a month YES at our cost as we believe that we must put something back into our society – different thinking to our present mean-spirited government eh? (sorry politics again)

c) continued, Another cost pressure is the internet and for us this is quite important yet recently we received a letter or message from 'Bigpond' telling us that our terms of contract could change. This leaves one somewhat bemused as I cannot write them to change my side of the contract, just imagine free internet access for us 'useless, in-the-way, complaining' wrinklies.

d) The aged pension is not only inadequate it is a contemptible sum an amount worked out for us by wealthy out of touch very well paid politicians. None that's not one of you could/would live – you may exist – on it. Yet when we were busy working and laying the foundation for this nation's success we paid taxes and a part of that tax other than to pay for the education of this committee was to pay for our eventual aged pension – where did this money go?? Now we are thrown a pittance, a bare bone while our "friendly, caring?" political masters/mistresses live in the lap of luxury. And these same people can look forward to an obscene government pension so will continue to live in the cosy lap of luxury. How any of you can look a pensioner in the face without blushing is beyond me.

e) We get, if my memory serves me, a discount on rates, motor vehicle registration, electricity, telephone oh we have our senior's card and sounding like beggars we ask business people if this card entitles us to a discount. Once we were proud workers and tax payers now we must demean ourselves by asking for pittances and this because of a mean spirited government. What if we can use our senior's card for free internet service and use it when buying fuel and have the government fuel tax removed. If you were to really be fair dinkum in this inquiry there must be many things you could help us with and we could both be better off – you could save your precious money and we would make out of it as well. I cannot think of any government policies which have had a lasting positive for us aged Australians. I can think on the cancellation of the dental policy now that had an effect alright, as I said previously I see the sums given us around election time as an indication of just how much this government holds us in disdain and contempt because these sums are a bribe to vote the 'right' way eh? "How much will we pay the silly old buggers for their votes this time Peter?" (There I go being political again but I was for years a liberal voter for many years actually)

In finishing I am sorry for being a little political and somewhat cynical but you do not see yourselves from our perspective, you do not listen to false promises and complete grubby lies, you do not see the seeming self serving and greed of you politicians. REMEMBER! We older Australians have dreams we older Australians get hungry we get cold we need medicines and treatments we need new clothes occasionally we would like to subscribe to magazines and even frequent good restaurants we would like to have less expensive access to the internet. We would like and I do think we are entitled to all that you would like for yourself and what you need. If possible I would like a copy of your findings when and if you really do complete this inquiry.

Sincerely Yours

Robert Patterson

