

The Secretary, Senate Community Affairs Committee

Cost of Living Pressures on Older Australians.

It is my submission that:-

(a) (a) (i) Self evident,

(ii) Self evident,

(iii) Due to inadequate free dental care for the elderly, with very long waiting times and poor quality care when it arrives many are forced to use private dentists whose costs are disgraceful. I was recently in need of three simple extractions and was told that an estimate of costs was not possible but that the dentist charged " at the rate of \$500 an hour" Dentistry should be brought under the ambit of Medicare and bulk billing for pensioners should be encouraged.

(b) (b) The impact upon those elderly whose main diversion and interest is travelling in an elderly campervan or caravan, thus keeping active and participating in their particular community of 'grey nomads', which brings cash to struggling country towns, is severely curtailed by fuel prices, particularly in remote areas. It would seem that remote fuel prices are governed more by the principle of 'we've got it, you want it., pay or get lost' than by any reasonable calculation of transport costs. Total lack of competition in remote areas leads to off-highway robbery.

(c) No contribution.

(d) Pensioners should be granted exemption from GST at the point of sale in shops or the raising of a bill by service providers. Most pensioners would be quite prepared to agree to the inclusion of photo I.D. on a pension card to prevent lending of the card to non-pensioners. This is accepted on driving licences and membership cards of clubs. GST impacts unfairly on those whose incomes are low.

(e) The complete emasculatation of the Prices Justification Tribunal in controlling fuel and food retail prices and the ACCC becoming a mute 'watchdog' - all watch and no bark or bite - has had a very big impact on all less affluent Australians and in particular pensioners. The notion that 'free competition in the market place' will control prices does not obtain when the market has so few participants, as in the fuel and food distribution areas.

Colin Burt