

To Whom It May Concern

It is hoped that when those taking part in the discussion regarding the "Inquiry into the Cost of Living Pressures on Older Australians" they remember the amount paid by the Federal Government via Centrelink to pensioners.

**(i) The impact of recent movements in the price of essentials, such as petrol and food.**

Neither my husband or I drive, but that does not mean we do not realise the cost of petrol is ridiculous. Many self-retirees and pensioners need a car to get around, but are not able to consider going out too often due to the cost of petrol.

As to food - don't be fooled by the large supermarkets and how they have daily bargains. With us it has reached the stage where we MUST purchase our food from Aldi, which enables us to have a larger selection of meat, fruit and vegetables and use a taxi to go out when it is cold and wet. If we done our fortnightly shopping at Coles, Safeway, IGA, Ritchies, we could not afford to purchase more than a quarter of what we do from Aldi.

Each winter the electricity and gas prices increase. It is now something that those of us on very limited incomes have come to expect.

It is much like the Victorian State Government Housing. Each time a pension increase is given the Victorian Office of Housing take at least half in rental increases. That means out of \$10 per year a pensioner in Victoria Office of Housing accommodation pays an increase of \$5-\$7, which leaves very little to cover the cost of food, medicine, fare, clothing, shoe, prices that have increased considerably.

The cost of food, medicines, clothing, etc increases so rapidly that it is no wonder that there are so many elderly persons virtually 'sitting waiting for God'.

As to the dental waiting list - I waited 13 years to obtain dental treatment. I was granted access to a dentist in 1994, but unfortunately the dentists I was permitted to see did not have wheelchair access. Whether or not I saw a dentist within the specified time given with this 1994 permit, I could not have my name included on a dental waiting list for 10 years. Abiding by this direction at the end of the 10 year period, I still had to wait a further three years to see a dentist at the Broadmeadows Health. Thank God for small? Mercies!

There are some of us pensioners who worked and paid taxes, but were unable to become self-retirees, but unfortunately you would think the pensioner and self-retirees were lepers the way we are treated. I do not consider myself old, just more or less recycled. I am merely riddled from head to foot with osteoarthritis which does not prevent me from being a volunteer at a local museum where I put in over 40 hours per week. I am one of the fortunate ones in having my husband as my carer, but regardless I could not sit at home and twiddle my thumbs, but to hear this Federal Government talk you would think I had one foot in the grave and the other on a banana skin. Be damned with them!

I hate to advise them I am still living and need to eat, taken medication, be clothed, and go out, so for heaven's sake allow me to do this and curb the costs of these items and remember ONE DAY YOU TOO WILL BE OVER 60!

Thanks for the opportunity to be able to air my views.

Elayne Whatman