

The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Inquiry into The Cost of Living Pressures on Older Australians

As pensioners we have very real concerns as to how our income will be able to cope with the rise in the cost of staple foods (such as milk, cheese, bread, meat, fish) and how it will affect our present healthy lifestyle. Our grocery bill rises on a regular and alarming rate and we will soon have to go without some items if they can't be purchased "on special".

As to the cost of running a motor vehicle - we live quite a distance from any major shopping centre (although we do have two very small centres within our area) and need our car (small) to run to and fro as the public transport system does not always connect with other public transport to get us to various destinations (ie. doctor, dentist and optician appointments as none are in our area). Of course, this means the alarming rise in petrol prices makes us very aware of not making any unnecessary journeys even for pleasure thus isolating us socially to a certain extent.

At this stage we are able to afford private health cover (fortunately neither of us drink or smoke and enjoy good health) but are worried that if these costs rise much more we will have to depend on the woefully inadequate public health system. We have always felt it is our responsibility to look after our own health, dental and optical needs but this might not be the case in the future.

While we are able to make ends meet on our present pension rate we are concerned that the age pension is nowhere near the minimum wage rate and wonder how long it will cover our basic needs. Local Government charges rise almost every year (up 5% in our area this year) as do charges for water, power, gas and so on. While we acknowledge and are grateful for the concessions we do receive, these will soon be inadequate if the present rate of increase continues.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to air our concerns.

J. M. Harris
W. E.K. Harris