

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Costs of Living Pressures on Older Australians

The following matters to the attention of the Inquiry.

1. Old age pensioners have received a \$500 bonus for the last few years while people on the DSP are ignored;
2. Utilities allowance is given to Age Pensioners – Disability Support Pensioners are not eligible for that allowance
3. Budget also awarded Carers a Bonus of up to \$1000.
4. When babies are born another bonus given to a group where once again people on the DSP are overlooked for any bonuses.
5. Seniors card was given at the age of 60- now minimum age has been bumped up to 65. The State Seniors Card is still awarded at 60, so why the change?
6. \$5.80 pharmaceutical allowance every 2 weeks. Each script costs \$4.90 – Mr Isaacs averages 8-10 scripts per month, which totals up to \$50. He has to choose which medicine he has to go without each fortnight because he cannot afford it.
7. Rough Comparison between cost of living in about 1990 and today:

Payment*	1990 (approx) (\$)	2007 (\$)	% Increase (average)
Disability Support Pension (couple rate)-	515	830	61
Electricity (average per quarter)	70-80	150-200	150
Phone (average per quarter)	70	150	115
Medication	Free	50	?
Public transport	0. 70	2.50	260
Petrol (average per litre)	0.30	1.30	300
Car Registration (Green Slip)	100-120	333	177
Car Repairs (hourly labour rate- not including car parts)	15-20	60-70	250
Rent (Dept. of Housing- % of income)	18%	25% (to incl. water)	7

Understandably, the cost of living will increase over the years and there is a 27 year gap, but as is shown from this rough table, the cost of living has doubled, or even tripled in some aspects, yet the increase of the DSP has only been by 61%

* This table is showing averages only and is personalised to Mr Isaacs' memory and experience of the DSP

Although table shows the rate for a couple, Mr Isaacs is now a widower and so his DSP comes to \$531 a fortnight, including in that total his pharmaceutical allowance.

With groceries, he pays \$36.40 a week to Meals on Wheels, who deliver 7 meals during the week. On top of that he needs \$100-\$130 to buy staples in order to survive. He remembers that he used to be able to afford some luxuries every once in a while, but now can barely afford food for the fortnight on his pension, when taking into account everything else he has to pay for.