

Elton Humphrey  
Committee Secretary  
Community Affairs Committee  
Department of the Senate.  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600.

Dear Sir,

I have been informed by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kevin Rudd, that you are conducting an enquiry into the current financial and living conditions of pensioners.

I would like this opportunity to submit my opinions to your enquiry being a Veteran Affairs pensioner and understand at first hand the problems besetting most age pensioners today.

Firstly there is a great deal of resentment amongst all pensioners at the unfair and one-sided assessment meted out to pensioners on the cost of living increase this year. The Australian workers were awarded a rise of in excess of 4%, the government seemed to feel they deserved in excess of 6% but the pensioners were deemed to only be worthy of 2.5% !! This alone has caused a great deal of resentment amongst the pensioner community. Somehow this government does not understand that all the rises in food, petrol and all other commodities for ones daily existence are the same for pensioners as the members of the community.

The government goes to great lengths to tell the Australian public how well they are managing the economy and how the present boom is bringing great benefits to all. That all does not include the pensioners, the value of their pensions is gradually being eroded by this so called 'bountiful boom'. Rents have been increased putting extreme pressure on those who have to rent privately but the rental allowance has not been amended to take this account.

The present legislation sets the single pension at 25% of the male total average weekly earnings. This may have been fair some time ago but with the influx of foreign workers who come and work on the very minimum wages and the governments new IR laws this erodes the value of 25% considerably ! Whilst the government then, smirkingly, tells us pensioners that their pension rate is being maintained, we have to suffer the loss. The foreign worker may be able to subsist on a low wage but the pensioner has to struggle on a lot less. The 'bar' for assessment should be set at least 10% above the male average wage to compensate the downgrade caused by the foreign influx.


This government always seems to find spare money to give in foreign aid even to countries that openly despise Australia but it is very reluctant to improve the lot of those in the community who cannot physically improve their income. The government is far too rigid in its control of maintaining the pension level. No pensioner expects to be able to live a life of luxury but neither do that wish to live like a 'third world inhabitant' and that is where we are heading.

We have done 'our bit' to make the country what it is, we have struggled through when times were tough and kept the country on the right tack and all we ask now is a fair go. We should have a fairer share of the economic boom or at least maintain our standard of living as it was 5-10 years ago. Pensioners should not have to live a life of needless anxiety when bills come through the post of higher power, gas and telephone charges that their pension increase does not allow for. Remember a pensioner is not able to put extra hours in to compensate for increases they are completely at the mercy of the government and the government should show more concern and consideration. We, the pensioners, the silly old buggers, out there in the community are responsible for you all being where you are today and we should be appreciated a little more than the present tight fisted government department responsible for our monetary existence. Let it not be overlooked that we may be old but we can make it to the ballot boxes when necessary.

I am not sure just what this Senate Enquiry will achieve simply because I am beginning to mis-trust most of the statements coming out of this parliament regarding money matters for the less fortunate members of our society. We know we are struggling, we know how difficult it is to 'make ends meet' and it really shouldn't need an expensive and long winded enquiry to prove this but I suppose the wheels of bureaucracy must turn as slowly as they ever do to come to the conclusion that what we claim is true. I realise that there is an element of cynicism in this submission but that has been brought on because of the performance, or lack of, for the Australian pensioner. It would do you no harm to actually have a couple of pensioners at your enquiry.

I just hope this does not get consigned to the 'too hard basket',

My kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. S. King', written over a horizontal line.