

Le Secretary,
Senate Community Affairs Committee,
P.O. box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Sir,

Enquiry into the Cost of Living Pressures on Older Australians

I wish to make the following submission to the above enquiry: -

I am a self-funded retiree aged 71, and my wife is also a self-funded retiree aged 69.

In July 2001, the taxable income limits for the Commonwealth Senior Health Card (CSHC) were fixed at \$50,000 for singles and \$80,000 for couples (combined income). There is no automatic increase for cost of living increases as shown by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Thus these income limits have remained fixed for 7 years.

As our combined income exceeds the \$80,000 limit by about \$8,000 we are not eligible for the CSHC. I am spending about \$700 p.a. on prescription drugs for a local condition, for prescriptions listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

I therefore believe that in equity, these income limits should at least be increased by movements in the CPI each year and that a one off increase should be made to the income limits which have been fixed for 7 years.

In addition to the above, because we exceed the present combined income limits we are not eligible for -

1. PBS prescriptions, generally without charge for the remainder of the calendar year after reaching the PBS safety net;
2. Bulk-billed GP appointments (at the discretion of the doctor);
3. A reduction in the cost of certain out-of-hospital medical expenses above a concessional threshold, through the extended Medicare Safety Net;

4. Concessional travel on Great Southern Rail Lines (Re Indian Pacific, Re Ekam, and Re Overland);
5. Telephone Allowance for eligible telephone subscribers; and
6. Living Concession Allowance which is linked to CPI, presently \$214 pa.

I look forward to the results of your inquiry, and in particular, urge that your committee recommend that the taxable income limits for the CSHC be increased from the present levels of \$50,000 for singles, and \$80,000 for couples, and that the limits also be adjusted annually by the CPI.

Yours faithfully,

Jm Newman (Mr. John Murray Newman)