

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

I hold concern for the impact of **Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Pension Reform and Other 2009 Budget Measures) Bill 2009** on the recipients of Parenting Payment single and their children.

My reasons for these concerns are:-

1. PPS was the only pension not included in the pension review for assessment, and yet a decision was made, in total ignorance of the viability of the benefit, to block the automatic adjustment for single parents that has been in place since the introduction of the Supporting Mothers Benefit in 1973.
2. Whilst the current Tax Review may deal with relevant tax considerations for single parents, its role is not to explore the adequacy of the income support benefit itself. The opportunity for this is now passed.
3. There is no suggestion that this “lesser pension” is a temporary measure. It will instead enshrine a new benchmark for poverty.
4. Both categories of single mothers now face more difficult financial times. Those not required to work because they have children under seven will now be required to exist on a pension considered not adequate for other pensioners. Under other recent legislative changes, those with older children must now survive on Newstart, a benefit designed to sustain in the short time only until full employment is found, when the Welfare to Work Legislation itself acknowledges that 15 hours work a week will be the limit for many single parents.
5. Because of my age I have strong memories of the 1940s through to the 1960s, when society dealt cruelly with single mother families. Deliberate government policy which denied adequate financial assistance to single mothers was responsible for the poverty, displacement, discrimination, lack of opportunity for both mother and child, the procuring of then illegal and dangerous abortions and mass adoption of children.

A groundwork for a return to such shameful social policy is playing out in various seemingly insignificant legislative changes and I would ask Senators to consider carefully the long term effects of these changes which will further impoverish single parent families.

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