

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

RE: Social Services Legislation Amendment (Budget Repair) Bill 2016

Alzheimer's Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into the Social Service Legislation Amendment (Budget Repair) Bill 2016.

Alzheimer's Australia is the peak body providing support and advocacy for people with dementia and their families and carers in Australia. Dementia is the second leading cause of death in Australia¹, and there is no cure.

The care and support of people with dementia is one of the largest health care challenges facing Australia. It is estimated that there are now more than 342,800 Australians living with dementia, and over a million people involved in their care; and that by 2050 there will be nearly 900,000 people with dementia². Each week there are 1,800 new cases of dementia in Australia, and this is expected to increase to 7,400 new cases each week by 2050³.

As such, any changes to the aged care pension have an impact on our consumers. The proposed changes to the Schedule reduces from 26 weeks to six weeks the period during which age pension, and a small number of other payments with unlimited portability, can be paid outside Australia at the basic means-tested rate. After six weeks, payment will be adjusted according to the length of the pensioner's Australian working life residence- so pensioners who have spent less than 35 years of their working life in Australia will find their pensions reduced after six weeks of overseas travel.

Needless to say, these changes can have an impact on the most vulnerable consumers, including those with dementia and especially those with significant behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia; those from CALD backgrounds, and those from other vulnerable minority groups; and low income/low wealth older people, including pensioners.

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) *Causes of Death, Australia, 2013: Cat no. 3303.0*

2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2015) <http://www.aihw.gov.au/dementia/>. Accessed 4 Nov 2015

3 Access Economics (2009) *Keeping Dementia Front of Mind: Incidence and Prevalence 2009-2050*. Report for Alzheimer's Australia.

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We are particularly concerned for people living with Dementia from CALD backgrounds, who may reside overseas for extended periods of time as they rely on extended family networks to provide appropriate care and support. Consumers from CALD backgrounds are more likely to have immigrated and thus would have spent less than 35 years of their working lives in Australia, and consequently will be disproportionately affected by these changes.

We would encourage the Inquiry to consider the implications such a change to the schedule will have on this vulnerable cohort and work with relevant organisations such as the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia (FECCA) and the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) in further understanding the issues for affected groups.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this consultation. Please contact us if you require further information.

Yours sincerely



Maree McCabe
Interim CEO
Alzheimer's Australia