

MEDIA RELEASE

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Bill to increase pension rate should include disability and carer pensions

The Federal Opposition should extend its call for a \$30 increase to the single Age Pension, single Service Pension and Widow B Pension to include the Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment.

As well as the usual living expenses, people with disability and their carers often incur significant additional costs as a result of disability.

For example, many Australians with disability rely on assistive technology (specialist equipment or aids) to help them manage with daily life. Wheelchairs, walking frames, screen readers (for blind people), continence aids, communication devices and a host of other technology assist people with disability to maximize their independence and, in many cases, to reduce their need for more expensive personal support services.

Access to aids and equipment schemes around much of Australia is slow, complicated and costly. People can be forced to make do without prescribed items for long periods.

The Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment should reflect not just the normal cost of living, but the additional costs that people with disability and their families often have to bear.

According to new research from the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of NSW people with disability are among Australia's most disadvantaged groups.

For the Coalition to exclude these pensioners from its Bill, which is now before Parliament, is inequitable.

National Disability Services (NDS) is the peak industry body for non-government disability services.

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