

**Transcript of statement at Senate Courtyard  
23/9/2008 (1:45 pm)  
by Joan Hughes, CEO Carers Australia**



The Urgent Relief for Single Pensioners Bill that was passed last night in the Senate has failed to address the acknowledged needs of 862,000 recipients of Carer Payment and Disability Support Pensions.

It is not acceptable to exclude any recipients of income support from this Bill.

People on Carer Payment and Disability Support Pensions are equally affected by the rising cost of living and are equally deserving of relief.

It is not acceptable to say you will consider these groups at some unspecified time down the track.

Their urgency is just as immediate.

However, it is also not acceptable for the Government to do nothing.

The need has been clearly identified – making political excuses for delaying relief to some of the most vulnerable members of our community is simply not good enough.

Carers Australia has said, and we maintain, the Pension Review currently underway is vital to addressing the long-term needs of Australians receiving income support payments.

But what we have also said, and we are equally determined to see addressed, is there are immediate short-term needs for those families who rely on these payments.

It seems that everyone is in agreement that the essential costs of living are rising far beyond the rate of growth in these payments.

Under these circumstances, it is unthinkable that we should expect income support recipients to wait for assistance.

Carers and people on disability support payments cannot wait another six months for the outcome of the review to find out whether they can afford to buy groceries this week.

The need is now.

We are calling for an end to the politics and the beginning of action.

Carers Australia is proposing a lump-sum payment of \$700 as an urgently needed measure to assist income support recipients until the findings of the Pension Review are known in February.

This is the simplest solution that will have a minimal impact on the complex Pension system as it currently exists.

This payment, if applied to the 862,000 recipients of the Disability Support Pension and the Carer Payment as well as those listed to benefit from the Coalition's Bill would cost approximately \$1.25 billion.

A relative drop in the ocean for the Government, but would make a meaningful difference to those most in need.

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