



LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

THE HON. DR BRENDAN NELSON MP

TIME TO ACT TO HELP AUSTRALIA'S PENSIONERS

The Coalition has today called for an increase to the single aged pension of \$30.

With cost of living pressures increasing, Australians are worse off since the election.

As I have said before, and as Mr Rudd and several of his colleagues now agree, I do not know how our single aged pensioners live on just \$273 a week.

I will move to introduce legislation when parliament sits next week to give Mr Rudd the opportunity to deliver an extra \$30 a week to around 860,000 Australians who need it and deserve it.

We should not wait for Mr Rudd to wait for yet another committee to provide him with yet another report. Australia's single aged pensioners need this increase, and they need it now.

A \$30 a week rise for Australia's single aged pensioners – including both full and part pensioners – will cost around \$1.34 billion over a year.

This can be achieved by Mr Rudd re-ordering his priorities or taken out of the more than \$20 billion surplus delivered on the back of the Coalition Government's strong economic management.

We also steadfastly oppose changes to the Medicare levy surcharge which will turbo-charge private health insurance premiums for the 202,000 pensioners over the age of 65 living on less than \$20,000.

The Coalition will also change the method of indexation so that pensions increase by whichever is greater out of the Consumer Price Index, 25 per cent of Male Total Average Weekly Earning (MTAWE) or the Living Cost Index for Age Pensioner Households - which better reflects what pensioners buy.

In Government, the Coalition took practical steps to improve the financial position of pensioners. As a result of linking pensions to wages (25 per cent of MTAWE) or CPI – whichever is greater – the maximum single rate of pension is now \$72.80 a fortnight higher that it would have been.

It was also the Coalition Government that expanded eligibility for the pension, while introducing the Utilities Allowance and Seniors Bonus.

The Coalition will also develop further policy to help older Australians. But this increase for the single age pension is something that should happen now.

This is a group of Australians who have done so much to build our country and define our values. They put their responsibilities ahead of their rights, and values ahead of value. They deserve a fair go.

10 September 2008