



Media Release

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Increased support for more than 3 million Australians

From tomorrow, more than 3 million seniors, carers and people with a disability will receive increased financial support from the Rudd Government.

The Rudd Government will deliver on a major election commitment - \$4.1 billion increases in the Utilities Allowance, Seniors Concession Allowance and Telephone Allowance.

For many seniors, carers and people with disability, making ends meet is a daily struggle.

The Rudd Government understands that many older Australians and people with disability are under financial pressure. The Government recognises the sacrifices made by the hundreds of thousands of people who care for them.

From tomorrow, the Utilities Allowance will go up from \$107.20 a year to \$500 a year for 2.4 million current recipients and it will be paid quarterly – the same time as the bills arrive.

And for the first time, around 845,000 recipients of Carer Payment, Disability Support Pension, Widow B Pension, Wife Pension and Bereavement Allowance will also receive the increased allowance.

Around 17,250 veterans and their partners receiving the invalidity service pension, partner service pension or an income support supplement will also receive the Utilities Allowance for the first time.

From tomorrow, the Seniors Concession Allowance will also go up - from \$218 a year to \$500 a year for around 320,000 Commonwealth Seniors Health Card and Gold Card holders, and will also be paid quarterly in line with the Utilities Allowance.

And to help seniors, carers and people with a disability stay in touch there'll be an increase in the Telephone Allowance for around one million pension recipients who have an internet connection. The allowance will rise from \$88 a year to \$132 a year for people receiving the Age Pension, Commonwealth Seniors' Health Card holders and recipients of Carer Payment and Disability Support Pension.

These are modest measures to help seniors, carers and people with a disability cope with cost of living pressures.