

MEDIA RELEASE

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Politicians urged to come clean on sneaky attack on pensions

The Federal Government and Opposition need to urgently come clean on their plans for deeming rates, COTA Australia and National Seniors Australia says.

The calls follow the government's refusal to rule out ceasing the current freeze on deeming rates, which feed into means testing for social security payments, including the Age Pension, JobSeeker, and parenting payments.

Advocates for older Australians estimate the move could leave a single age pensioner up to \$3300 a year worse off.

COTA Australia Chief Executive, Patricia Sparrow and National Seniors Australia Chief Executive Officer Chris Grice said deeming rates should continue to be frozen while pensioners and other Australians are battling with the current cost of living crisis.

"This would have a huge impact on older Australians ability to make ends meet," Chief Executive Officer of COTA Australia, Patricia Sparrow, said.

"Older Australians, and others whose crucial payments are determined by deeming rates, deserve to know what our political parties have in store for them.

"The current cost of living pressures are already hitting many Australians, particularly those on fixed incomes, hard. To expect people to deal with a drop of more than \$3000 on top of what they're currently trying to cope with is unreasonable at best."

"The latest indexation adjustment to the Age Pension in March wouldn't even allow a pensioner to buy a coffee per week. Pensioners are already struggling; our politicians need to recognise that and confirm they won't pile more pain on top of what people are already feeling."

National Seniors Australia Chief Executive Officer, Chris Grice said the freeze impacted more than 450,000 Age Pensioners.

"Older Australians are struggling to pay competing necessities such as utilities, petrol, groceries, insurances, and rent. The continued freeze on deeming rates would spare part-pensioners and other income support payment recipients a drop in income and the loss of the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card and with it, loss of access to valuable concessions," Mr Grice said.

"Providing cost-of-living relief with a continued freeze on deeming is a sensible way to help older people meet daily living costs. We need to ensure any changes to deeming rates are fair for everyone, including pensioners.

"Any changes need to be measured, incremental, and transparent in its calculation, so we don't end up in a situation where older Australians who are already struggling under cost-of-living pressures are hit even harder.

"This can't be a matter of wait and see. For our political parties to attempt to sneak through changes to deeming rates after the election would be outrageous."

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