

## Purpose, intent and adequacy of the Disability Support Pension

On 13 May 2021, the Senate referred an inquiry into the purpose, intent and adequacy of the Disability Support Pension to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 November 2021. There are many challenges faced by people diagnosed with cancer in accessing financial support through the Disability Support Pension. Cancer Council and the [Oncology Social Work Australia and New Zealand \(OSWANZ\)](#) made a joint submission proposing that changes should be made to improve access for people with cancer to the Disability Support Pension.

We offered the following suggestions for consideration in the review:

- Provide an income support program through Centrelink that meets the needs of people unable to work due to chronic ill health, such as cancer.
- Revise the eligibility and assessment criteria to recognise the unique circumstances of a cancer diagnosis, long-term treatment requirements and recovery on someone's ability to work.
- Adopt a consistent approach to waiving mutual obligations based on medical exemption for people with cancer or other chronic illnesses, applied across all Centrelink programs, using a proforma to guide the collection of detailed, accurate and appropriate level of medical evidence, and inclusion of categories to satisfy the elements of the diagnosis, treatment and condition stabilisation.
- Take an inclusive case management approach, provided to support everyone with cancer or other chronic illnesses who requires it, with access applied consistently across all Centrelink programs, including DSP. This should be complemented by a simplification of the process, enabling more efficient engagement for people with cancer or other chronic illnesses.
- Introduce a new tailored income support program or enhancement to the DSP to meet the needs of people with chronic or terminal illness or serious injury who are medically unfit to work.
- Review of the rate of payment and set an appropriate rate for persons with a disability and people unable to work due to cancer.

Once the Committee has considered all submissions, they will be made available on the Committee webpage:

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Community\\_Affairs/DisabilitySupportPensio](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/DisabilitySupportPensio)