



# **COTA Australia Pre-Budget Submission 2022/23**

**Prepared by**

**COTA Australia**

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## About COTA Australia

COTA Australia is the national consumer peak body for older Australians. Its members include the State and Territory COTAs (Councils on the Ageing) in each of the eight States and Territories of Australia. COTA Australia and the State and Territory COTAs have around 40,000 individual members and supporters and more than 1,000 seniors' organisation members, which jointly represent over 500,000 older Australians.

COTA Australia's focus is on national policy issues from the perspective of older people as citizens and consumers and we seek to promote, improve and protect the circumstances and wellbeing of older people in Australia. Information about, and the views of, our constituents and members are gathered through a wide variety of consultative and engagement mechanisms and processes.

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## Foreword

We welcome the opportunity to submit this submission in advance of the 2022/23 Federal Budget. We note that further policies may be released as part of COTA Australia's Federal Election positions.

Older Australians need a comprehensive plan from the Australian Government, demonstrating that all areas of Government are thinking and acting in a coordinated fashion to improve the lives of mature age and older Australians. Given the breadth of the portfolio areas that touch on older people's lives, COTA Australia's maintains its view that a focused Whole-of-Government Strategy for Older Australians is required.

The Government has provided a comprehensive response to the Aged Care Royal Commission, and is currently working to implement its commitments. We note however that a number of recommendations of the Royal Commission have not yet been conclusively agreed to or funded by the Government. Of most concern is the commitment to the higher level of staffing time in residential care, including 24/7 nurses available onsite, which was the second part of the Royal Commission recommendation. In addition the government should commit to fund the decision of the Fair Work Commission on the claim for increased remuneration for all staff in the sector. Another recommendation not yet agreed to by Government is the recommendation to develop a Senior Dental Benefits Scheme, not only for those in aged care homes but for all low income older Australians.

While the past two years has rightly focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, as we move into the next stage of COVID-19 it is important to consider the economic recovery for older workers. Measures to get them into the workforce and encourage them to remain in the workforce are critical for our country's recovery. Similarly, work commenced prior to the pandemic must be continued. This includes consideration of how retirement income policy can be improved based on the observations of the Retirement Income Review.

COTA Australia stands ready to engage with Government on these and any other measures affecting the lives of Australians over the age of 50 years.

## Summary of proposed measures

### Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

- A whole-of-government strategy for older Australians and an ageing Australia, with annual reports of achievements against the strategy and its action plans.

### Department of the Treasury

- Consult on further changes to policy, and initiatives to achieve the objective of the retirement income system, following the Retirement Incomes Review
- Consult on supplements to the Retirement Income Covenant
- Legislate to require the Superannuation Guarantee to be added to paid parental leave.
- Mandate - within a reasonable timeframe for implementation - the provision of financial advice to consumers by superannuation funds about their likely retirement income. Such measures should include 'wake up packs' for over 50s and a refocus on their forecast income to be available in retirement, rather than a focus only on a lump sum. A mandated suite of standard calculations and formats to be used should be included in order that the information is comparable.
- Commit to a well-resourced and structured consultation with stakeholders and the community – including with consumers - on the findings of the Retirement Income Review and potential policy measures that might follow from its findings beyond those recommended above for immediate implementation.

### Department of Health

- The development of a publicly funded senior dental health program bulk billed through Medicare. Initially, the program is to target older people on low incomes, in addition to all people living in a residential aged care home, receiving a home care package or on admission to hospital.

In the 2022-23 Federal Budget fund an ongoing, sustainable and higher-level funding of the National Partnership Agreement on Public Dental Services to support state and territory public dental services.

Ensure the funding enables each eligible older Australian to access within their state or territory, initially up to \$1,000 oral health and dental care treatments per annum. The annual amount to be link to CPI increases and the outcomes of the program reviewed every three years.

## Department of Health (Ageing)

- Remain committed to the implementation timetable and broad agenda for aged care reform established in the 2021/22 Budget.
- Provide a significant direct investment in the aged care workforce by committing to fund the outcome of the Fair Work aged care work value case.
- Commit to 24/7 aged care nursing, with a minimum average of 215 care minutes per resident, per day, including 44 minutes by a registered nurse.
- Make public a more detailed implementation plan, timetable and consultation schedule for aged care reforms.
- Fund consumer engagement activities to ensure that the lived experience voice of older Australians and their carers remain at the heart of the aged care reform process.
- Develop and implement a new Aged Care Act based on a human rights framework in consultation with older people with lived experience of the aged care system.
- Clear the home care package waiting list by 31 December 2022 and ensure that new entrants are offered a package within one month of their assessment.
- Establish all governance arrangements for the new system.
- Implement an aged care ratings system incorporating aggregated information across staffing levels, quality outcomes and the lived experience of people currently accessing aged care services. Information should include quality of life indicators and be publicly available.
- Implement a streamlined home care service program ('Support at Home'), merging the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CSHP) and Home Care Packages Program, strengthening policy development and improved design, and addressing issues including value for money for consumers, improved transparency of services and fees and better data on consumer outcomes.

## Department of Education, Skills and Employment

- Promote the uptake of the Career Transition Assistance Program, including funding for an advertising campaign.
- Implement early promotion of the Career Transition Assistance Program via Centrelink communications to mature age applicants of Jobseeker (irrespective of when they commence receiving payments).
- Include people over 55 in the JobMaker program.
- Trial alternatives/supplements to the Restart wage subsidy program to increase mature age employment amongst the long term unemployed.
- Provide formal legal advice by the Australian Solicitor General or similar around the ability for job advertisements to identify preferences for mature-age workers.
- Establish a roundtable to discuss technical solutions to matching employers and employees

using online job boards

- Build a mature age employee/employer match into government job boards.
- As an interim measure, Increase the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance and commit to consulting on a new model for low-income rental support
- Permanently abolish the Liquid Assets Waiting Period, commencing immediately with people over 50.
- Raise the rate of Jobseeker and improve indexation
- Change the Age Pension asset taper rate to \$2.25/\$1,000 level
- Liberalise the age pension work bonus to further encourage part-time, casual, seasonal, or self-employed work by age pension recipients.
- Supplement pension deeming rates with an opt-in scheme for reporting the actual earnings from financial products.

## Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

### A Whole-of-Government Approach to Ageing

COTA Australia appreciates the work Government has done to promote older people across its portfolios. Inclusion of older people as a target of Australia's Disability Strategy, older workers in the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, and a recently enhanced 75+ health check in Medicare are three examples of silo initiatives. COTA has long advocated for a Whole-of-Government Strategy for Older Australians that would tie such initiatives together so that they work consistently to achieve whole of government goals. The strategy should act as a high-level plan to guide measures that address identified issues and challenges faced by older people in consistent and complementary ways. Such a plan would also require Government to consider its approach to services and programs for older people across all its portfolios and provide an opportunity to centralise their promotion to older people.

Government has responded to the recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission and considered some of the findings of the Retirement Income Review. While supportive of these priorities, COTA is concerned that such measures will not be optimised or embedded within longer term policy, without a comprehensive framework designed to improve the lives of older Australians.

Currently some this work is done through the More Choices for a Longer Life Inter-Departmental Committee, particularly with those measures related to jobs and skills. Specifically, that package included a commitment to 42 measures which address a number of policy areas including:

- Aged Care;
- Jobs and skills;
- Finance for a longer life;
- Supporting choice and a healthy long life; and
- Safeguards quality and rights.

We propose that the groundwork to transform the More Choices for a Long Life package into a Whole-of-Government Strategy be included in the 2021/22 Budget.

#### Measure:

- A whole-of-government strategy for older Australians and an ageing Australia, with annual reports of achievements against the strategy and its action plans.



## Department of the Treasury

### Consult on any proposed changes following the Retirement Income Review

The Final Report of the Retirement Income Review was released on 20 November 2020. It explored the relationship between the various pillars of retirement income and provides a welcomed evidence base for future policy making. Importantly, the Report prompts a discussion about ensuring the system encourages the use of retirement income and assets to optimise quality of life in retirement. This is a critical conversation for us as a nation.

COTA Australia was pleased to see the Report address issues such as defining adequacy. The Report also suggested a 65-75% target for the Replacement Rate. Key outstanding issues, including the future mechanisms for consumption, the taxation of intergenerational wealth transfers, and the role of the family home as the major asset for most households, will require a great deal of consideration and consultation. COTA Australia stands ready to engage with the Government about these complex issues that are vital to current and future older Australians.

### Retirement Income

There is an ongoing need to improve the adequacy, equity, and sustainability of retirement income, particularly for less well-off Australians. A major challenge is to ensure that the retirement income system into the future will be to produce adequate income for all people to live on comfortably in retirement; and that is efficient, equitable and fiscally sustainable; including guaranteeing the future availability of the age pension for those who require it. A holistic approach is needed to provide greater confidence for older people who have carefully planned their retirement incomes - by maintaining arrangements for longer periods of time and by grandparenting provisions when they do change.

### Consult on supplements to the Retirement Income Covenant

The More Choices for a Longer Life package (2018-19 Budget) included a commitment to the introduction of a Retirement Income Covenant in the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993. The Retirement Income Covenant is now being legislated, but it is only the first step toward ensuring optional retirement income. Further action is required to inform Australians in the accumulation phase to better understand the impact that their choices, or lack of them, will make to their income in retirement.

On that basis, we advocate for the introduction of 'Wake Up' Packs to be provided to all Superannuation account holders upon turning 50 years of age. These packs should contain appropriate information to advise them of their likely income after retirement based on their current trajectory and provide suggestions for alternative arrangements.

#### Measures:

- Consult on further changes to policy, and initiatives to achieve the objective of the retirement income system, following the Retirement Incomes Review

- Consult on supplements to the Retirement Income Covenant
- Legislate to require the Superannuation Guarantee to be added to paid parental leave.
- Mandate - within a reasonable timeframe for implementation - the provision of financial advice to consumers by superannuation funds about their likely retirement income. Such measures should include 'wake up packs' for over 50s and a refocus on their forecast income to be available in retirement, rather than a focus only on a lump sum. A mandated suite of standard calculations and formats to be used should be included in order that the information is comparable.
- Commit to a well-resourced and structured consultation with stakeholders and the community – including with consumers - on the findings of the Retirement Income Review and potential policy measures that might follow from its findings beyond those recommended above for immediate implementation.

## Department of Health

### Senior's Dental Program

COTA Australia continues to call for the inclusion of dental health in Medicare for older Australians. It is critical that all older Australians have access to oral and dental health care services. As a member of the National Oral Health Alliance, we assert that *this is not an optional extra, this is good health policy*.

Close to one-third of older adults have untreated tooth decay. This is allowed to happen despite the evidence showing severe gum disease is associated with chronic disease and severe health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and respiratory disease. In addition to helping prevent the conditions listed above, the evidence highlights that good oral health and dental care are linked in less direct ways with the prevention of other diseases. For example, poor oral health is associated with heart and lung infections and rheumatoid arthritis.

Poor oral health can also add to the costs within the broader health system. People unable to access required oral health and dental care services in the community are likely to place increased pressure on general practices, emergency departments and hospitals. As the 2017-18 public health data shows, about 72,000 hospitalisations for dental conditions in that year could have been prevented with earlier treatment. Similarly, in a 2014 study it was reported one per cent of Australian public hospital emergency department presentations were primarily of a dental nature with two thirds being dental abscesses and toothache.

Access to a free, comprehensive Seniors Dental Care Program is critical to an older adult's physical health and wellbeing. Timely access to oral health and dental care services can have a profound impact on an older person's quality of life. It has the potential to make a significant contribution to experiencing a life free of oral pain and discomfort, maintaining a well-balanced, nutritious diet, enjoying interpersonal relationships and having a positive self-image.

At present, senior Australians' access to oral health care services is affected by financial, social, educational and structural barriers, as well as a range of well researched predisposing and enabling factors. The dynamic interplay of these barriers and factors is clear for seniors on low incomes and/or living outside metropolitan and large regional areas. Looking at cost alone, available data show that each year at least 200,000 senior Australians forgo oral health and dental care they need because they cannot afford the out-of-pocket costs. Many others, despite the high potential for severe health consequences, have teeth removed. This is because extraction is cheaper than investing in preventative or restorative treatments. It is time to prioritise older people's oral health.

Federal government should adopt the position that good oral hygiene is vital throughout life. To date, Australia's public investment in oral and dental care is focused on children, with seniors being mostly overlooked. Long waiting lists in the public adult dental system, poor value for money for dental work covered by private insurance and the scant provision of such services for those in aged care are a costly omission; in personal, as well as whole of community terms.

Despite the knowledge of the holistic impact of the lack of timely access of community based oral health and dental care, the Federal Government's contribution has dropped significantly in the last 8 years. The 2021/22 Budget included \$107.8m for adult care via the National Partnership Agreements to the States.

This equates to a 44 percent decrease since 2013-14, whilst the population has increased by 9 percent. By comparison, Federal Government support for dental care via private insurance grew by 2.7 percent a year – 24 percent cumulatively since that year.

COTA Australia wants the Federal Government to develop a publicly funded and sustainable senior dental health program bulk billed through Medicare. This model can build on the existing child dental benefits schedule approach. Such an approach would allow both the public dental system to continue to support its patients while also expanding support beyond the capacity and locations of the public scheme to include private dental practitioners.

In its development phase (a two year period commencing 1 January 2023), the program's eligibility would be restricted to older people on low incomes (that is, with less than the Australia's minimum wage, currently \$40,175).

In addition, the program would be made available to all older people on entry to a residential care facility, hospital or on acceptance of a home care package. In all such instances, an appropriate oral health care plan with dental practitioner input would be developed and implemented through the program at no cost to the older person and/or their family. For all eligible program consumers the required services could be accessed in the public or private dental system, including their homes.

#### Measures:

The development of a publicly funded senior dental health program bulk billed through Medicare. Initially, the program is to target older people on low incomes, in addition to all people living in a residential aged care home, receiving a home care package or on admission to hospital.

In the 2022-23 Federal Budget fund an ongoing, sustainable and higher-level funding of the National Partnership Agreement on Public Dental Services to support state and territory public dental services.

Ensure the funding enables each eligible older Australian to access within their state or territory, initially up to \$1,000 oral health and dental care treatments per annum. The annual amount to be link to CPI increases and the outcomes of the program reviewed every three years.

## Department of Health (Ageing)

The Australian Government invested \$17.7B in the 2021/22 budget over four years to commence implementation of reforms responding to the Aged Care Royal Commission, and committed more funds in the December 2021 MYEFO, bringing total investment to over \$18 billion..

COTA Australia supports the intentions and purpose of the initiatives in the Australian Government response to Aged Care Royal Commission and urges a continued commitment to timely and transparent implementation. We note however that in implementing these reforms greater attention is needed on how to best support older people and their carers with lived experience of aged care to contribute to reform processes.

Within the next five years the outcomes of aged care reform should include:

- Ensuring that older people are empowered to have choice and control over their care planning and service delivery.
- Genuine engagement with older people and their families by the Australian Government in the design and implementation of the reforms.
- Full transparency and accountability of service provider performance, quality, safety, and costs.
- A star rating system where older people and their families can compare information on the performance, quality, safety, staffing, and costs of aged care service providers.
- A set of policies and programs to get poor providers out of the system, whilst supporting staff and residents.
- A new Act, based on human rights, that empowers and protects consumers.
- Ending the waiting lists for home care, with no more than 30 days from application to getting a service. This will ensure older people can remain living in their own home for as long as possible.
- Increasing the amount of time that residents in nursing homes receive from front line staff and nurses.
- The funding for “care packages” in residential aged care will be allocated to the person, rather than the provider, meaning they can pick and choose among better providers, and can move between homes and take the funding with them.
- A stronger regulator with increased capability and capacity to act quickly against poor providers, address poor leadership, service practice and culture, lack of clinical governance and low staff numbers.
- A substantial aged care workforce with the right skills, qualifications, and attitudes to meet the care needs of older Australians.

COTA Australia calls on the government to indicate to the Fair Work Commission its support for an increase in remuneration across the sector, and its commitment to fund the outcome of the Fair Work case which is now supported by unions, provider peak bodies, and consumer peaks, including COTA Australia. Better wages are essential to attract, train, and retain a higher skilled workforce to aged care to commiserate to the important work they are undertaking. In addition the Government should commit to the Royal Commission’s recommendations that by 1 July 2024 an increase in minimum staff time standard include:

- an average of 215 minutes per resident per day for the average resident,
- at least 44 minutes of that staff time provided by a registered nurse, and
- at least one registered nurse on site per residential aged care facility at all times.

Such a commitment is needed now, two years out in order that the sector can ensure adequate staff are trained and available to deliver on the required number of workers to achieve such outcomes.

#### Measures:

- Remain committed to the implementation timetable and broad agenda for aged care reform established in the 2021/22 Budget.
- Provide a significant direct investment in the aged care workforce by committing to fund the outcome of the Fair Work aged care work value case.
- Commit to 24/7 aged care nursing, with a minimum average of 215 care minutes per resident, per day, including 44 minutes by a registered nurse.
- Make public a more detailed implementation plan, timetable and consultation schedule for aged care reforms.
- Fund consumer engagement activities to ensure that the lived experience voice of older Australians and their carers remain at the heart of the aged care reform process.
- Develop and implement a new Aged Care Act based on a human rights framework in consultation with older people with lived experience of the aged care system.
- Clear the home care package waiting list by 31 December 2022 and ensure that new entrants are offered a package within one month of their assessment.
- Establish all governance arrangements for the new system.
- Implement an aged care ratings system incorporating aggregated information across staffing levels, quality outcomes and the lived experience of people currently accessing aged care services. Information should include quality of life indicators and be publicly available.
- Implement a streamlined home care service program ('Support at Home'), merging the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CSHP) and Home Care Packages Program, strengthening policy development and improved design, and addressing issues including value for money for consumers, improved transparency of services and fees and better data on consumer outcomes.

## Department of Education, Skills and Employment

### Mature Age Employment

The reasons older Australians seek to remain in employment are the same as for every other cohort; maintaining their preferred income, connection to colleagues and community, and professional skills development. Unfortunately, structural ageism makes their endeavours significantly harder than they should be. For an increasing number of older Australians continued employment to a very mature age is vital due to factors such as low savings and superannuation, high living costs, family circumstances and living in private rental. Moreover, active employment in the years leading up to retirement contributes significantly to the subsequent financial security of older people in retirement. It results in less need to rely on the Age Pension, retention of private health insurance, capacity to part fund care and support, etc.

While economic research in this space is scarce, what is available indicates that higher levels of mature age employment increase economic productivity. The 2016 Golden Age index by PwC found that if Australia's employment participation rate for workers aged 55 years plus (52 per cent) was to increase to Swedish levels (74 per cent), the potential gains to the Australian economy could be about \$69 billion. Of that, \$57 billion could be achieved by increasing employment participation for people age 55-64. However, once an older person becomes unemployed, they find it much more difficult to re-enter employment. People aged 55-64 years spend on average 36 weeks looking for work until they find employment, compared to 14 weeks for all age groups.

COTA Australia is enthusiastic to work with Government, to ensure that barriers to work for older Australians are reduced.

Programs such as the Restart Wage Subsidy are important for encouraging the employment of older workers and reducing these barriers. However, the Restart Wage Subsidy also showed that many older employees find their employment has been discontinued after a relatively short employment period, once the initial boost from the subsidies lapse. In terms of financial incentives, COTA believes an ongoing reduction in income tax or company tax on small to medium businesses for each mature age employee may be a sustainable, long-term alternative to the Restart Program. We consider that such a tax reduction or concession would encourage retention of mature age employees for longer periods and is therefore worth trialling.

### Career Transition Assistance Program

Our subscriber base reports that newly unemployed older Australians are still assuming that they must wait until they are in receipt of income support before they are eligible to benefit from the CTAP. We know that this is not true. The message that you do not need to be in receipt of, or even eligible for, income support, to receive this type of assistance is still not reaching older Australians. To that end, COTA Australia advocates for an increased awareness of the Career Transition Assistance Program, possibly through an advertising campaign. Jobactive providers must also be supported and encouraged to actively refer participants to this service.

## Job Matching

Mature jobseekers report difficulty finding roles that are suitable for older workers. COTA Australia sees a proactive role for Government and recruitment search engines to better match workers. There is an opportunity to explore ways to match jobs where employers can actively seek mature age employees and jobseekers who self-identify as mature age using job search platforms online. This may include the provision of advice, potentially through the Office of the Solicitor General, regarding job advertisements for mature-age workers. This could be combined with building a mature age employee/employer match into government job boards and establishing a roundtable to discuss technical solutions to matching employers and employees using online job boards.

## Income Support

Evidence from the 2020 Retirement Income Review suggests that hardships in retirement incomes are a reflection of hardships during working life – particularly for low-income individuals, women, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. COTA Australia is committed to improving the lives of low-income Australians in both during working life and during retirement.

Many older Australians find it very difficult to access employment due to age discrimination. Figures released by the AIHW in 2021 show nearly 20 percent of Jobseeker recipients were classified as mature age workers. With the current high cost of living and the extremely low base rate of Jobseeker allowance, these older people find they must draw on their savings or other assets to meet living costs.

### **As an interim measure, Increase the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance and commit to consulting on a new model for low-income rental support**

Older Australians in the private rental market are amongst the most disadvantaged Australians. COTA Australia has long argued that the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance must be urgently and significantly increased for those in the private rental market so that both older renters on JobSeeker and age pensioners can continue to put an adequate roof over their head.

The Retirement Income Review correctly identified that, long term, there is a need to reimagine housing support for low-income Australians. COTA Australia agrees with this. While there is an urgent and immediate need to raise Commonwealth Rent Assistance, we agree there is a need to discuss what better and more efficient long term solutions can be achieved for those with low incomes in the private rental market. COTA Australia will work with Government and the wider community to consult on a sustainable alternative model.

In the interim COTA Australia urges an increase in the maximum amount of rent to which Commonwealth Rent Assistance applies by at least 40%. This would mean retaining the current calculation of paying \$0.75 of CRA for every dollar of rent paid over \$124.60. The maximum amount of rent paid used in this calculation would increase 40% from \$310.73 per fortnight to \$435.02 per fortnight. This would result in an increase of the maximum Commonwealth Rent Assistance payable (depending on the amount of rent you pay) increasing from \$139.60 per fortnight to \$232.82 per fortnight, or an extra \$93.22.



## **Permanently abolish the Liquid Assets Waiting Period**

For those pushed into involuntary retirement, a stronger safety net is needed to ensure they do not have to draw down on their retirement assets during their working years. To assist jobseekers during COVID-19, the Liquid Assets Waiting Period was temporarily removed. This welcome removal prevented older unemployed people having to draw down on their retirement savings before qualifying for income support. By supporting older Australians on Jobseeker to retain their existing financial resources leading up to retirement, the measures have potential to reduce later pressures on the Age Pension. The LAWP has now been reinstated. The LAWP disproportionately affects older Australians, especially those that were forced by personal circumstances to use financial vehicles other than superannuation. COTA Australia supports the abolition of the LAWP altogether, in line with recommendations from several reports, including the Henry Tax Review, commencing immediately for those over 50 years.

## **Raise the rate of Jobseeker and improve indexation**

COTA Australia urges the Government to implement a permanent and adequate increase to the base rate of Jobseeker to ensure that the income of recipients cannot fall below the Henderson Poverty Line under any circumstances. This must include improvements to the indexation of Jobseeker. While a range of options are available, one approach could be to benchmark Jobseeker payments in the same manner as the Age Pension. The age pension is indexed much closer to the true basic costs of living than the current CPI-only approach applied to Jobseeker.

## **Change the Age Pension asset taper rate to \$2.25/\$1,000.**

This was set at \$3 per \$1,000 of assets until 2007, when it was changed to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assets. It was then changed back to \$3.00 in 2015. This creates some perverse incentives/disincentives to savings and investment behaviour between certain levels of savings. COTA joins other organisations such as the Grattan Institute and Mercer in calling for the setting of a more appropriate Age Pension asset taper rate, which Grattan has suggested should be \$2.25.

## **Liberalise the age pension work bonus to further encourage part-time, casual, seasonal, or self-employed work by age pension recipients.**

COTA advocates for the age pension work bonus to be extended until the individual earns the equivalent of the minimum adult wage. This will encourage more older Australians to remain engaged in work to help address workforce pressures and encourage continued workforce engagement by older people, which has many evidence based benefits, including better health and reduced health costs in later years.

## **Supplement the pension deeming rates system with an opt-in system for pensioners to be assessed on the actual earnings from financial products.**

This move would take advantage of recent improvements to online reporting capabilities and provides an alternative to the current system that can result in people being deemed to earn more investment income than they are able to achieve." Most people will continue to use the deeming rate system which rewards those able to earn more than the deeming rate and is simple to operate.

### Measures:

- Promote the uptake of the Career Transition Assistance Program, including funding for an advertising campaign.
- Implement early promotion of the Career Transition Assistance Program via Centrelink communications to mature age applicants of Jobseeker (irrespective of when they commence receiving payments).
- Include people over 55 in the JobMaker program.
- Trial alternatives/supplements to the Restart wage subsidy program to increase mature age employment amongst the long term unemployed.
- Provide formal legal advice by the Australian Solicitor General or similar around the ability for job advertisements to identify preferences for mature-age workers.
- Establish a roundtable to discuss technical solutions to matching employers and employees using online job boards
- Build a mature age employee/employer match into government job boards.
- As an interim measure, Increase the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance and commit to consulting on a new model for low-income rental support
- Permanently abolish the Liquid Assets Waiting Period, commencing immediately with people over 50.
- Raise the rate of Jobseeker and improve indexation
- Change the Age Pension asset taper rate to \$2.25/\$1,000 level
- Liberalise the age pension work bonus to further encourage part-time, casual, seasonal, or self-employed work by age pension recipients.
- Supplement pension deeming rates with an opt-in scheme for reporting the actual earnings from financial products.