



THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP
MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

MB26-000215

Senator the Hon Sue Lines
President of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear President

I am writing to advise you that the Government responded to the recommendations of the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee's report on the *Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Safety Net) Bill 2023* by moving a motion in the Senate on 1 August 2023.

I have enclosed the relevant extract of the Hansard from 1 August 2023.

Yours sincerely

TANYA PLIBERSEK

25.3.2026

line, to \$88 a day. Raising the rate above the poverty line would help people rather than hold them back from finding work. We saw during the height of a pandemic that governments can end poverty and ensure a strong social safety net. We should not need a pandemic for the government to choose to end the suffering of thousands of Australians, their households and their children. I just repeat that the amendment I foreshadowed is in Senator Hanson-Young's name.

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Assistant Minister for Trade and Assistant Minister for Manufacturing) (12:08): I'd like to thank all of the senators who have participated in this debate on the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Safety Net) Bill 2023 and the senators who participated in the Senate committee process around this important piece of legislation. It strengthens our safety net, which is critical for not just the Australians who need it but our social cohesion more broadly. The measures in the bill deliver a \$9½ billion investment, which reflects the government's commitment to consider the rates of income support payments ahead of every budget. The bill will increase the rate of working-age and student payments by \$40 a fortnight, including the JobSeeker payment, youth allowance, the parenting payment (partnered), Austudy, Abstudy and other related payments. That measure will provide around 1.1 million Australians with immediate cost-of-living relief. The \$40 increase to working-age and student payments recognises the particular challenges faced by people on those income support payments. If passed through the Senate this week, the basic rate of the JobSeeker payment will increase by \$56.10 to \$749.20 per fortnight, including indexation, from 20 September 2023.

The bill will also extend eligibility for the higher rate of JobSeeker payment by reducing the qualifying age from 60 to 55 years whilst retaining the requirement that the person has been on the payment for nine or more continuous months. This measure means that, from 20 September 2023, people aged 55 to 59 who have been on the payment for more than nine months will be better off by at least \$109.40 per fortnight, including indexation. This increase will bring the basic rate of JobSeeker payment for this cohort to \$802.50 per fortnight, including regular indexation applied on 20 September. The proportion of mature-aged recipients on JobSeeker has significantly increased over the course of the last decade. The change recognises the challenges that many older people can face when looking for a job due to age discrimination or poor health.

The government is also providing additional support to single parents by extending the eligibility for parenting payment single. The changes in this bill will benefit around 60,000 single principal carers so they can balance caring responsibilities and paid work. As a result of this measure, an eligible single principal carer on a JobSeeker payment whose youngest child is under 14 years will be transferred to the higher parenting payment single rate of \$922.10. This is an extra \$176.90 per fortnight in their basic payment to help with the costs of raising children. The rate will also be indexed on 20 September. The exact amount will be determined in mid-August when the required data is released by the ABS. The Albanese government recognises that single parents face many barriers to employment and financial security due to the investments, both financial and of their time, associated with caring for children on their own. I want to acknowledge the role that community leaders like Terese Edwards, the CEO of the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children, who has welcomed this announcement. People in the community have argued about this measure for a very long time, Ms Edwards in particular. Her patient, careful, effective advocacy has really delivered. To further increase support for income support recipients, the government is increasing the maximum rate of Commonwealth rent assistance by 15 per cent—the largest increase in over 30 years.

I've listened to the debate carefully. I've watched the positions of some of the Senate participants, both in the debate and over the course of recent announcements that have been made about senators' and parties' positions on these issues. I look forward to debate about this bill, the amendments and its passage through the Senate. I just gently make this point: the machinery of government that is allocated towards ensuring that payments flow from 20 September is predicated on the successful passage of this piece of legislation through the parliament this week. It is absolutely the right and the responsibility of senators here to make their case and to express different views about the structure, process and purpose of social security legislation. I want to make this point very clear: any successful amendment of this bill risks real people missing out—real people whose interests people in this place have argued for, many of them over many, many years. It is my view that a responsibility is incumbent on this place. Make the arguments, by all means, but do not delay. Do not frustrate. Do not deny low-income families the benefit of the payments that are set out in this bill. While it may not meet the policy objectives of the opposition and may not meet the ambitions of the Greens party, there are real people who are relying on this Senate to do its work and make sure those payments make their way into their accounts in the week following 20 September. I commend the bill to the House—to the Senate; wherever we are!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question before the Senate is that the second reading amendment standing in the name of Senator David Pocock be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [12:20]