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Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

To Whom It May Concern

SCOA's Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Budget Repair) Bill 2016*

Schedule 1 – Age Pension

Schedule 1 of this Bill proposes to reduce from 26 weeks to six weeks the period during which age pension and certain other payments with unlimited portability can be paid outside Australia at the basic means-tested rate. After six weeks, payment will be adjusted according to the length of the pensioner's Australian working life residence.

Our organisation believes that it is unreasonable to reduce a person's age pension once they have been outside Australia for only six weeks. There are a number of reasons why people might need to stay outside Australia for longer than six weeks, such as caring for a dying parent or other relative, or recovering from an illness or accident. If this measure were to become law, it would cause unnecessary hardship to vulnerable people.

Schedule 2 – Pensioner Education Supplement

Our organisation does not wish to comment on this measure, as it is not relevant to our members.

Schedule 3 – Education Entry Payment

Our organisation does not wish to comment on this measure, as it is not relevant to most of our members.

Schedule 4 – Indexation

This measure seeks to freeze the income free areas for all working age allowances (other than student payments), and would affect those of our members of working age and receiving social security pensions. Our organisation opposes this measure because it will cause unnecessary hardship to vulnerable people.

Thank you for your consideration of the issues raised in this submission. I would be happy to discuss the issues further with the Committee. Please contact Federal Office on 02 6286 7977 to make the necessary arrangements.

Yours sincerely

(Dr) Annette Barbetti
FEDERAL PRESIDENT