The principal Act, the Health Insurance Act 1973, which this Bill seeks to amend, provides for payment (by way) of medical benefits and for hospital services and related matters. In conjunction with the Health Insurance Commission Act 1973, and the National Health Act 1953, this Act forms the legislative basis of the Medibank scheme restructured by amendments to these Acts in 1976.

The Purpose of this Bill is to alter the definitions of the pensioners and dependants who are eligible for benefits under the Act so that those definitions are similar to those in the National Health Act 1953, which National Health Bill (No. 3) 1976 (the related Bill, 2 H. of R. 13.10.1976) proposes to place on parity with the means test definitions which apply in the Social Services Act 1947. In this way, a consistent means test applies to pensioners and dependants for the determination of eligibility for benefits under the 3 Acts.

This Bill is consequential upon the new income-only test for pension eligibility which is proposed in the Social Services Amendment Bill (No. 3) 1976.

This Bill seeks to effect an amendment to the principal Act (National Health Act 1953) so that a similar means test applies to the determination of pensioners’ eligibility for “fringe benefits”.

This Bill also provides that the new income test for pension eligibility will also apply to the issue of pensioner health benefits cards, and revises the definitions of “dependant” in relation to “pensioner” so that it is more closely in line with the corresponding definitions in the Social Services and the Repatriation Acts.

This Bill also provides for the preservation of the eligibility of those people who qualified as pensioners or dependants under the existing criteria, but may not otherwise qualify under the new provisions sought in the amendment.