

NAPWA urges pension changes

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In a submission to the federal government's review of pensions and the tax system, NAPWA has made a plea to the review panel headed by Dr Jeff Harmer, Secretary of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), for urgent action to be taken on the rate of pensions and concession entitlements as they affect people with HIV.

Written by Ron Woods in consultation with a NAPWA Reference Group, the submission argues for an increase in the Disability and Aged Pensions of \$100 per fortnight based on current increases in living expenses, particularly in rents, food and transport costs. It also uses data from the HIV Futures 5 survey of HIV-positive people in Australia which reveals that, of those on a government benefit, 58% are living below the recognised Henderson Poverty lines.

'Of these, people living alone are more likely to be living in poverty than those in couples', the report says. The current single rate of pensions is paid at 60% of the couples' rate and NAPWA is arguing for the single rate to be increased to 70% of the couples' rate, to help people, including many with HIV, to cope with the greater expenses involved with living as a single.

The costs of living with a chronic illness are significant, with extra costs for pharmaceuticals (including some non-[1][Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme] The federal government program which subsidises medication costs in Australia. Anti-HIV drugs are part of a special part of the PBS called Section 100 (S100) which is used for expensive, highly specialised drugs. items), complementary medicines, dietary supplements and services like counselling needing to be taken into account when framing levels of support needed from government, the submission says.

NAPWA suggests one possible way to provide this support would be to introduce a "chronic illness concession card", which gave concessions for pharmaceuticals and other therapies to people with a chronic illness, including those on a low income. Weakening the link between income support and the health concession card for those returning to work would help people with HIV manage their extra costs in the workforce as well, it suggests.

- [Disability Support Pension](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/121>