

Mrs Shelley Haley
[removed for privacy reasons]

Mr Wayne Swan
Treasurer
Member for Lilley
PO Box 182
Nundah, QLD, 4012

Dear Mr Swan

As a self-funded retiree I wish to raise two issues with you concerning the proposed legislation re the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card **and** the rumoured proposals re removing the imputation credit system.

(1) Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card

I believe that it is against the spirit of the original Keating government's policy for the Rudd government to change the definition of taxable income for the purposes of the Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card. For many self-funded retirees they are either entering into, or are experiencing, part of their lives when health costs are inevitably going to increase because of aging. Retirees also bear the brunt of CPI changes and have a large proportion of expenses that frequently rise more than CPI such as rates on their place of residence, energy charges and private health insurance premiums. Many self-funded retirees have been long-term members of private health funds and are regularly 'hit' with fee increases that are well above the rate of inflation.

Government policy has been towards shifting the responsibility and risk of retirement to individuals away from government funded Age Pensions and Defined Benefits. Consequently as self-funded retirees are freeing up government resources and funding for other purposes, more should be done to 'keep the playing field level' in relation to the CSHCC. It is obvious that the public health systems across Australia are unable to cope with the demands already placed on them, and there is often talk of 'outsourcing' surgery et al to private hospitals in attempts to reduce public hospital waiting lists.

Given the above, it seems that the proposed Rudd government policy to change the definition of the taxable income for the purpose of the CSHCC is short-sighted and needs to be re-thought. Re-tightening access to superannuation while still working and lowering the Assets threshold again on the Age Pension are better ways to balance out the conflicting goals of helping people retire on the maximum savings possible whilst saving the Age Pension for those who really need it. Government policy should be to make it more affordable for self-funded retirees to continue to obtain pharmaceutical discounts via the CSHCC, and avoid tightening the rules.

(2) Removing the imputation credit system

This again is against the Keating government policy to encourage investment in Australian companies and therefore encourage job creation. Am I remiss in thinking

that the Rudd government is not concerned with ensuring the maximum jobs for Australians are available for our citizens?!!

Such a policy is also discriminating against many self-funded retirees who have invested heavily in Australian companies, rely on the income from such investments and, therefore, stay off the Aged Pension.

I ask that you pass on my concerns to the relevant people in the government and bureaucracy.

Yours faithfully
Shelley Haley