



A U S T R A L I A

MEDIA UPDATE: FEDERAL BUDGET

Friday, 15 May 2009

MS Australia welcomes employment measures and pension increases

MS Australia welcomes both the initiatives to support employment and increase the base rate of the Disability Support Pension (DSP) and Carer Payment announced in this week's Federal Budget.

Pension Increases

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a lifelong disease that is costly for individuals and families. Research shows that people living with MS bear personal costs of nearly \$4,000 per year, and family carers forego income earning opportunities to provide informal care.

For people relying on the DSP, this permanent increase will relieve some of the pressure. For carers, the increase to the carer payment and the guarantee of the \$600 supplement recognises the financial impact of caring.

The changes to DSP assessment include a greater focus on the impact of disabilities and disease and the involvement of treating doctors in establishing work capacity. This will lead to better processes and outcomes for people with MS seeking DSP support.

Employment

80% of people with MS lose their employment within 10 years of diagnosis and they work part time at a rate three times that of other Australian workers. Measures announced to provide better support in the workplace to maintain long term employment are good news and we await further detail about this program.

The program to provide additional employer incentives is a good measure to encourage employers to take on people with a disability.

Policy Manager Alan Blackwood said, "Many people with MS would like to re-join the workforce and use their skills and experience. This measure may provide some impetus to opening up the labour market for them."

"We need a comprehensive approach to employment participation that combines job placement, job retention and seamless work/welfare interface."

Companion Card

The commitment to the National Companion Card program is also a good move to support regular community participation for people with MS.

Ends

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