

I was very disturbed to hear of the proposal to increase charges to the Gold Opal Card, up to an increase of 360%, this is an extremely retrograde and regressive step. It is yet another piece of legislation that will severely impact the older and poorer members of society.

Currently, I am a regular user of public transport as, like many elderly people, I no longer drive. The proposed increase in fares would be difficult for me and many others to manage. This will have a very damaging effect on society for several reasons: first, health - cheaper fares enable older people to go out, enhancing health and well-being; second, the social contact and stimulation of visiting friends and relatives and the mental stimulation offered by social interaction are known to promote mental health; third, spending by pensioners is beneficial to local economies.

The proposed increase in fares and the possibility of an increase in GST are not the only poverty trap facing pensioners. There is also the confiscatory changes to the asset threshold test. ALL part pensioners will have their pensions halved - yes, **halved** when taper relief is reduced from the current deduction of \$1.50 for every \$1000 above the threshold to a deduction of \$3.00 for every \$1000 over \$250,000 from 1 Jan 2017. Some pensioners, dependent on income from their assets, will lose their whole pension, if they have assets over the lower thresholds to be introduced Jan 2017. This is extremely inequitable when superannuation income is not taxed.

This change to part pensions is described in The Seniors Newspaper, as a poverty trap. These changes were proposed by Scott Morrison when he was Social Services minister and were passed by the Senate in June 2015 in complete opposition to the letter sent to pensioners by Tony Abbott when he was Prime Minister, which categorically stated **THERE WILL BE NO CHANGES TO AGED PENSIONS!!!!!!!!!!!!**

I hope you will be able to bring these matters to the attention of appropriate people in State and Federal Parliaments.