



12 August 2022

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Lifting the Income Limit for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card) Bill 2022 Legislation

The ANMF welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Community affairs on the impact of this proposed legislation to our members and the healthcare of the wider community more generally.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) is Australia's largest national union and professional nursing and midwifery organisation. In collaboration with the ANMF's eight state and territory branches, we represent the professional, industrial and political interests of more than 310,000 nurses, midwives and carers across the country.

Our members work in the public and private health, aged care and disability sectors across a wide variety of urban, rural and remote locations. We work with them to improve their ability to deliver safe and best practice care in each and every one of these settings, fulfil their professional goals and achieve a healthy work/life balance.

Through our work with members, we aim to strengthen the contribution of nursing and midwifery to improving Australia's health and aged care systems and the health of our national and global communities.

The ANMF also represents thousands of nurses, midwives and aged care workers who are retired or semi-retired for whom this proposed legislation would have a significant and positive impact.

We note that the Bill proposes to amend the Social Security Act 1991 and the Veterans Entitlement Act 1996 to increase Commonwealth Seniors Health Card income tests to \$90,000 per year (up from \$50,000) for a single and \$144,000 for a couple combined (up from \$72,000).

The ANMF supports the proposed changes to the Bill, particularly with regard to the positive health impacts it would have where the increased income test limits will allow more individuals access to relevant pharmaceutical and medical benefits, and lower GP co-payments where applicable.

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ANMF Journals

Australian Nursing and
Midwifery Journal (ANMJ)
E anmjadmin@anmf.org.au
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Australian Journal of
Advanced Nursing (AJAN)
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W www.ajan.com.au

ABN 41 816 898 298



In 2020-21, more than half a million people in Australia deferred or didn't fill a prescription due to cost.¹ People with chronic health conditions, and particularly multiple chronic health conditions, have higher healthcare costs. Many are choosing to use limited funds for cost of living rather than healthcare and medicines.²

The ANMF believes that the Bill has the potential to reduce presentations to hospital emergency departments with better access to cheaper medicines for more people in the community.

We note and strongly support the purpose of the Bill, which is to increase the availability of health concessions to more Australians. Reducing the cost of co-payments for senior health care cardholders for PBS listed medicines from \$42.50 to a maximum of \$6.80 will result in positive health outcomes for the community and for those who may have previously been unable to afford vital medicines.

The ANMF supports any increased access to government support to help with the rising cost of living and reducing the cost of medicines for older Australians with chronic health conditions and some of our communities most vulnerable.

We thank the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs for the opportunity to provide input into this Bill. Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at fedsec@anmf.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Annie Butler'.

Annie Butler
Federal Secretary

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2021. Patient Experiences in Australia: Summary of Findings. Retrieved August 2022. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-services/patient-experiences-australia-summary-findings/latest-release>

² ABS. 2021. Patient Experiences in Australia: Summary of Findings.