



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Pensioners' Rally statement by Richmond MP, Mrs Justine Elliot

The Rudd government is committed to building a modern Australia capable of tackling the challenges of the 21st century.

As the local MP for Richmond in the Rudd Government, I am proud that our **first budget delivered \$5.2 billion in additional funding** for older Australians.

As Minister for Ageing, I am responsible for nursing homes and community care. Over the next four years, the Rudd Government will invest more than \$40 billion into this area; \$11.4 billion into community care such as home help and meals on wheels services.

And in this first budget, the Australian Government – through Minister for Families and Community Services, Ms Jenny Macklin – delivered the \$500 Bonus and also substantially increased the Utilities Allowance from \$107.20 to \$500. It is now paid quarterly instead of half-yearly.

But, there is more than just the Bonus and Utilities Allowance in this budget. If you have the internet your phone allowance increases from \$88 to \$132. For the first time, there are additional bonus payments to pensioners who are also carers.

More than two million Age Pensioners receiving income support will now be able to earn more income and hold more valuable assets without their pensions being affected.

Starting early 2009 pensioners and those who are eligible for NSW Seniors Card are now able to use it cross border for the first time for transport concessions. Indeed, you can now receive the concessions across Australia.

In addition, the Federal Government has also substantially increased funding to the States to reduce surgical waiting times and the Government is reintroducing the Commonwealth Dental Health Program and reverse the cruel cut to this program made by the previous Government in 1996.

We understand the cost of living pressures on our seniors. **That's why our first budget delivers \$5.2 billion in additional funding for seniors.** This is just a start and we know that more needs to be done.

That is why the Government has committed to a total review of our taxation system and of retirement incomes.

Fixing the system after 12 years of neglect by the previous government is not simple. But the Government is getting on with job and as your local MP; I am committed to fighting for the best outcomes for our community.

Contact Minister Elliot's Office: (02) 6277-7280