

Fears grow that the Senate may take away pensions

Final counts will reveal whether the Coalition will control the upper house from next July. At best it will be one away from an absolute majority, with the added concern that Families First may be more likely to support the Coalition.

The first key issue under renewed threat is disability support pension (DSP) legislation that has already been blocked twice in the Senate. Under the Bill people with a disability assessed as able to work for award wages for 15 hours a week would not be eligible for a DSP. The current benchmark is 30 hours.

Understandably, people currently working and receiving a part disability pension will now be feeling under threat. It is possible that some DSP recipients will be shifted to the Newstart Allowance, which pays \$60 a fortnight less, without transport and other benefits.

MHCC has received anecdote comment that some individuals have already reduced their work hours to ensure their pension is not threatened.

For many people with psychiatric disability the increased stringency and compliance processes of the Newstart Allowance require a level of organizational skills that may be difficult for some. Stress related to the threat of 'breaching' if compliance is not achieved can exacerbate mental health problems.

MHCC is writing to the relevant Cabinet Ministers advocating for further review of the legislation and we encourage you to write with your concerns to the following contacts.

The Hon Peter Dutton, MP
Minister for Workforce Participation
and
The Hon Kevin Andrews, MP
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
at
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600