



President: Stuart McMillan

General Secretary: Colleen Geyer

04:CG:JB

15 February 2016

The Hon Christian Porter MP
Minister for Social Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your advice which was forwarded to my predecessor on 18 December 2015 and arrived on Christmas Eve.

I regret to say that I found the advice extraordinarily disappointing.

However in your response to a question from the Member for Denison (Andrew Wilkie) in Question Time on Monday 8 February, I noted a reference that has not previously appeared in any statements or material associated with the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Defined Benefit Income Streams) Act 2015.

The Hansard record shows you stated: “. it is obviously important to note for present purposes that if it was one of those very rare schemes that was contributory then there are bases on which the rules that we are about to introduce can be excluded.”

This statement suggests a marked difference in approach from the tone and content of your advice to my predecessor before Christmas. As there are more than 1000 recipients of defined benefit income streams from the “very rare” contributory Uniting Church in Australia Beneficiary Fund who have been advised that their income support pensions have been reduced by up to \$10,000 per annum, I would be most grateful for your urgent advice of the details of the “bases on which the rules . . . can be excluded.”

I understand that individual circumstances may vary, however, the implementation of the above legislation has generated extreme anxiety across the whole fraternity of retired Ministers and their spouses as well as the wider church community. Your confirmation that a different approach has been determined will assist to allay the significant fears and concerns that have been expressed.

Colleen Geyer
General Secretary