



*Zali Steggall MP*

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR WARRINGAH

Senator the Hon Anne Ruston  
Minister for Families and Social Services  
Manager of Government Business in the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Senate  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Wednesday 15 April 2020

Dear Minister,

I write to you regarding concerns raised from vulnerable members of my electorate, in particular older Australians, disabled constituents and pregnant women.

### **Older Australians and disabled constituents**

With regards to older Australians and disabled on respective pensions, I am seeking greater clarity as to why those on the Age Pension and the Disability Support Pension have been excluded from eligibility for the Coronavirus Supplement payment of \$550 per fortnight. Many other recipients of social services are eligible including both Youth Allowance and JobSeeker, while those on pensions are not.

It seems anomalous to many in the community that those on the JobSeeker and Youth Allowance are now receiving more than the most vulnerable in our society, at a time when they are most at risk. The cost of everyday services has increased for these people and many must now pay additional fees for home delivery or home visits for services due to their susceptible immune systems.

Less than 10 percent of those on the Disability Support Pension are on the NDIS and hence do not benefit from the increased support that has been provided through the scheme. I urge you to consider extending the Coronavirus Supplement to these sections of the community so that they may maintain their health and comply with the Government direction to self-isolate as effectively as possible.

## **Pregnant women**

Regarding paid parental leave, I have been approached by women in my electorate and elsewhere seeking early access to their paid parental leave entitlement and an extension of the support.

Pregnant women have been identified as an at risk group of the population. Bringing forward the eligibility for paid parental leave so that pregnant women can claim the payment prior to the birth of their child would be a prudent measure and would allow those who are still required to travel to a workplace to stay home and self-isolate.

To best support pregnant women through this challenging period, I urge you to also consider extending the number of weeks available through the paid parental leave scheme. An extension to 35 weeks would bring Australia in alignment with the policies in the UK, Canada and Sweden and had already demonstrated productivity benefits and widespread support from businesses and the community prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Zali". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Zali Steggall, OAM MP**  
**Federal Member for Warringah**