



## **Amanda Rishworth MP**

Member for Kingston

Speech to Federal Parliament

17 June 2009

### **2009 Budget – Sustainable Pension Reform**

(Kingston) (11:18 AM) —I would like to take this opportunity to commend the minister on the significant reforms in the pension and other support for carers in this budget—unlike the previous government, which completely ignored pensioners for 12 years. Despite putting forward to the media that they were the hero of pensioners, they did absolutely nothing. They kept getting reports commissioned and never, ever acted on them. I am incredibly pleased that as soon as we came to government this government did commission a report, the Harmer review, and in this budget we are seeing the minister taking forward some of those very important recommendations from the Harmer review and putting them into action. This has been certainly welcomed by the 23,000-plus pensioners that I have in my electorate of Kingston.

Over the last 18 months I have been speaking particularly to single age pensioners. In fact, I would like to recount the experience of one pensioner that spoke to me. For some time he had been on a couple pension with his wife. His wife has recently passed away and he came to me and said: ‘Amanda, I did not understand how difficult it was for single pensioners. I cannot live on a single pension.’ When the budget was announced he came to me and really thanked us for the \$32 a week increase because it will have a significant impact on his life.

This has certainly been significant for the many single pensioners in my electorate and they have welcomed it. From what I am hearing from pensioners, I think they know that the previous government did nothing for them. When we came to government we increased the utilities allowance, and pensioners are now seeing us back that up with this pension reform. Couple pensioners have also been very pleased to receive the increase. I have also heard a lot of people say they are pleased that all the different allowances have been simplified into one payment, and that the payment has been increased. That has certainly been very much welcomed.

I would like to spend a small amount of time talking about the carers bonus. Under the previous government, people waited around budget time unsure as to whether or not they would get the bonus. They were not sure what would happen and they were unsure how they would budget. They have very much welcomed the stability that the \$600 ongoing payment provides to them. They have been very pleased with this, have welcomed it and have, I think, really appreciated that this government has acknowledged the role that carers perform. I have heard the minister speak many times on the vital role that carers have. I know that she is very passionate about it,

and that message is translating to constituents in my electorate. So that budget measure has certainly been welcomed.

I want also to touch briefly on the changes that we are making to indexation of the pension. A lot of pensioners have said that they wish their pension would keep up with the things that pensioners buy. They tell me that the things they buy go up more quickly than some of the consumer price index items. So they were very, very pleased that we are going to create a new type of indexation that will more reflect the things pensioners buy. A comparison will be made with the consumer price index and whichever is higher will be used. That has certainly been welcomed by my constituents; it has been one of the common things that people have raised with me.

Overall this has been a huge pension reform. One of the biggest pension reforms we have seen in a long time is happening in the budget under this government. My question to the minister is: could she elaborate a little more on some of the key pension reforms that will benefit my constituents of Kingston?