

18A/94

Including Student Assistance Decisions

Opinion

One of the reasons for replacing the *Social Security Act 1947* with the *Social Security Act 1991* (the plain English version) was to make the Act more accessible to the general public. The end result of this exercise is an Act which has 1364 sections, and is continually amended. In 1995 the Act was amended by nine pieces of legislation. Many of these amendments made significant changes to the law. The DSS itself has given up printing an up-to-date unofficial reprint of the Act. DSS officers have access to an updated version of the Act on computer, OPAL. The last official reprint was on 2 April 1993. CCH prints the only up-to-date version of the Act, but the cost of the CCH service would be beyond the resources of most members of the public.

Some recent amendments to the Act are:

- disability support pensioners and their partners can keep fringe benefits for 12 months if pensions are cancelled because of excess earnings
- partners allowance will be paid from the same date as the partner's benefit if the claim is lodged within 14 days
- payment of sole parent pension is limited to people who are living separately and apart indefinitely or permanently

- rates of additional family payment increased

[*Social Security (Non Budget Measures) Legislation Amendment Act 1995*]

- disability support pension and disability wage supplement qualifications are not to be based on factors consequential to impairments, e.g. lack of motivation

- native title rights are exempt from the assets test

- two or more lump sum compensation payments for the same condition are to be treated as one payment for compensation preclusion purposes

[*Social Security Legislation Amendment Act (No. 1) 1995*]

- maternity allowance (a new benefit) is to be paid at the time of the birth of the baby

- family payment and additional family payment are to be amalgamated

[*Social Security Legislation Amendment (Family Measures) Act 1995*]

- special circumstances was restored as a basis for waiving a debt from 1 January 1996.

[*Social Security Legislation (Care Pension and Other Measures) Act 1995*].

[C.H.]

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The **Social Security Reporter** is published six times a year by the Legal Service Bulletin Co-op. Ltd. tel. (03) 9544 0974

ISSN 0817 3524

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Contributors: Helen Brown, Christine Heazlewood, Susanne Liden, Bill Mitchell, Mary Anne Noone, Andrea Treble

Layout: Elizabeth Boulton

Printing: Thajo Printing, 4 Yeovil Court, Mulgrave

Subscriptions: \$35 a year, \$25 for *Alternative Law Journal* subscribers

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Print Post approved PP381667/00178