

SOCIAL SECURITY

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Including Student Assistance Decisions

Opinion

The 1997-98 Budget and social security

Family Payment

From January 1998 there will be a new assets test for the minimum Family Payment of \$406,000 (excluding the family home), if the family's income is above \$27,000. This change would probably have its biggest impact on farm families. The Family Payment will be paid at the minimum rate for up to 8 weeks, when a child and/or parent goes overseas. This will benefit many families with close relatives overseas.

Sole Parent Pension

From March 1998 the sole parent pension and parenting allowance will be replaced by the Parenting Payment.

Child Disability Allowance

Arrears of CDA will be paid for 6 months rather than 12 months from January 1998. New CDA Disability Tables will be introduced from July 1998. Only new claimants will be affected. The Health Care Card will be provided to new claimants for CDA who do not qualify but who have a chronic medical condition — a welcome change.

The Unemployed

The 'Work for the Dole' scheme will be introduced from September 1997. There will also be a change to liquid assets waiting period. Uniform rules will be introduced to apply to all situations.

Age Pension

The deferred retirement bonus plan will be introduced from July 1998. That is, if a person keeps working after the retirement age, the person will receive a lump sum bonus payment tax free when the person finishes work. The assets and income test will be amended so that those in receipt of private pensions or annuities will be treated more generously. There will be a reduction in the number of Financial Information Service Officers.

Carer Pension

Carer Pension will be paid to carers of profoundly disabled children under 16 years, from July 1998.

[C.H.]

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