

Cancer Council responded to the Senate Select Committee on Cost of Living in March 2024. The Committee sought to understand the cost-of-living pressures facing Australians, the government's fiscal policy response to these pressures, and measures to ease the costs of living through government services and the tax and transfer system.

Cancer Council's submission provided evidence of the out-of-pocket costs and financial burden many Australians experience during their cancer experience, including medical expenses, reduced household incomes and indirect costs (such as additional transport and childcare). Our submission highlighted the direct impact of financial hardship on cancer treatment decisions and survival, and highlighted how the rising cost of living is experienced in addition to the financial costs and pressures of cancer.

Cancer Council recommended the following measures to ease the cost of living through the provision of government services:

- Working toward true Universal Health Coverage in Australia and reducing out-of-pocket costs.
- Implementing Recommendation 3 of the [Medicare Review Taskforce's final report](#), which calls for a consistent, documented procedure that assists healthcare providers supporting informed financial consent before a course of treatment.
- Retain telehealth Medicare Benefits Schedule item numbers that enable greater access to telephone and video consultations where clinically appropriate.
- Utilise the Health Technology Assessment Review to implement processes and policies that support optimal cancer care to be publicly funded.
- Increase access to financial counselling services for Australians affected by cancer through introducing a mandatory industry funding model alongside increased investment from federal, state and territory governments.
- Improve the experience of people with cancer who require income support payments by ensuring they are supported by Services Australia to access the most appropriate program and financial support without onerous reporting or exemption processes.
- Implement stronger employment protections and supportive return-to-work policies for people with cancer, including carers of people with a cancer diagnosis.
- Amend the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) to provide extended unpaid carers leave so employees can better meet their caring responsibilities.

Further information about the Senate Inquiry is available at:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Cost_of_Living/costofliving.