



"Excellence in Psychosocial Oncology"

Media Release

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OSWA welcomes improved pension access for cancer patients

The Australian Government's *Fast-tracking Disability Support Pension claims for severe disability and cancer* released 3 June 2010 is an important step in ameliorating some of the financial and emotional stress experienced by cancer patients and their families, Oncology Social Work Australia said today.

Oncology Social Work Australia (OSWA) stated that it is well known that even with today's improved treatment that a significant number of cancer patients die within a few years of their cancer diagnosis.

Current treatments now mean that cancer patients who used to die within a few weeks to months of diagnosis are now living from several months to sometimes up to two years longer. Often after treatment these patients are very disabled as a result of the disease process and/or treatment.

Treating doctors are often reluctant to state that a cancer patient has a terminal illness as treatment is being given with 'curative intent'. However, even with treatment a number of cancers still have a very poor prognosis and Centrelink have identified a number of them for DSP eligibility by diagnosis alone. These cancers include small cell lung cancer and Glioblastoma Multiforme.

Centrelink has also identified a number of cancers where patients may not have the need for a Job Capacity Assessment after further investigation by Centrelink. These cancers include acute leukaemia and head and neck cancers.

The fast-tracking of a number of cancers will reduce protracted negotiations with Centrelink regarding eligibility. Overall, these recent changes will result in timely access to Centrelink payments and pensioner concessions and a reduction in some of the emotional and financial stresses for some cancer patients and their families.

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