

## **Seniors' welcome new concession card limits**

**4 November 2022**

National Seniors Australia welcomes changes to eligibility rules for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card (CSHC). Tens of thousands more retirees can now receive cheaper health costs and cost-of-living concessions.

The CSHC is a Federal Government concession card that provides access to cheaper medicines through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and other federal concessions as well as concessions offered by some state and territory governments.

CSHC income test limits have now been increased to \$90,000 for a single (up from \$61,284) and \$144,000 for couples (up from \$98,054). To get the card, you must meet residency requirements, be of Age Pension age and meet an income test

Chief Advocate of National Seniors Australia Ian Henschke has welcomed the change.

“This is good news for retirees struggling with rising living costs. Extending the CSHC card eligibility according to government calculations means an extra 44,000 retirees will now get access to concessions to help ease cost of living pressures.”

“This change came about because during the Federal Election both major parties agreed to lower the income test threshold if they won. While there were some delays in getting this through parliament, we thank the government and crossbench for finally passing this change,” he said.

“It’s important self-funded retirees check if they are eligible, because unlike the Pensioner Concession Card, the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card is not automatically issued. You must apply, and you can do this now via Centrelink.

With this change announced, National Seniors Australia will step up its push to bring about changes to alleviate the drastic and growing workforce shortages in the care sector.

“While we support the change to the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, there are a range of other policies the government can adopt to improve the lives of all older Australians. Changing pension income test rules to allow them to work without penalty and training more mature age workers, particularly in home care will boost the care workforce and the incomes of pensioners with limited savings.”

**Ian Henschke is available for comment. Please call 0488 047 380 to arrange an interview.**

## CSHC facts

### *Concessions available:*

- Cheaper prescription medicines: Those under the PBS are subsidized by the federal government.
- Bulk-billed doctor visits: At the discretion of the doctor.
- Access to the Extended Medicare Safety Net (EMSN) Concessional benefit: This gives you a better Medicare refund for any out-of-hospital costs during a calendar year. The 2022 threshold amount for out-of-pocket hospital costs is \$717.90. If you exceed this, you will be refunded 80 per cent of the amount or the EMSN benefit caps for hospital services. Information at the [Medicare website](#).

Depending on where you live, state and territory concessions can give you lower energy bills, council and water rates, and lower health care and public transport costs. You can check it all out on our free National Seniors [Concessions Calculator](#). (E.g., in WA \$1668.37, \$512.23 (SA) \$450 (regional NSW) a year.)

**How to get the card:** You must be an Australian resident of pension age, don't already receive a social security benefit and earn below the income threshold. Unlike the Age Pension, there are no asset thresholds, (but some assets will be deemed to earn income included in your income assessment).

Assessable income, under the CSHC income test, includes a combination of actual income and deemed income. Actual income is 'adjusted taxable income, which comprises of:

- taxable income
- tax exempt foreign income
- total net investment losses
- reportable superannuation contributions
- reportable fringe benefits
- total net investment losses
- certain tax-free pensions and benefits

Deemed income is only from account-based income streams (not from any other financial assets you own). An account-based income stream is purchased with superannuation money and is commonly known as an allocated or transition to retirement pension.

**Note: The lower deeming rate will remain frozen at 0.25 per cent and upper rate will remain at 2.25 per cent** for the next two years to 30 June 2024. From 1 July 2022, the lower deeming rate applies to financial investments up to the threshold amounts of \$56,400 for singles and \$93,600 for couples