



THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP

Minister for Families and Social Services

MEDIA RELEASE

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Liberal-National Government boosts integrity for Australian pensioners living overseas

Australian pension recipients aged over 80 who are living overseas will be asked to provide a 'proof of life' certificate every two years to continue to receive their age pension, Minister for Families and Social Services Paul Fletcher said today.

"We estimate 6000 cases will be identified of Australians living overseas, who were formerly lawfully receiving a pension but who have now died, where taxpayers' money is continuing to be paid out," Mr Fletcher said.

Mr Fletcher said that according to Government figures the annual death rate of Australians aged over 80 living on a pension overseas is about half that of people of the same age living in Australia on a pension.

"The most likely explanation is that many Australians who were living overseas on a pension have died - but that has not been made known to the Government and we are continuing to pay their pension.

"In some cases it could be fraud. In others, it could be that the former Australian pensioner's family incorrectly think that they remain entitled to receive the pension formerly paid to their loved one.

"Whatever the reason, we have a duty to taxpayers to make sure the Australian Government is not paying pensions to people who are no longer alive.

"That is why we are going to introduce a simple and fair system of requiring anyone aged over 80 who lives overseas and receives an Australian pension to provide a proof of life certificate every two years, with this requirement to take effect from 1 July 2019."

Mr Fletcher said there are about 96,000 Australian pensioners living overseas, with most receiving the Age Pension.

The new measure is expected to save taxpayers about \$150 million over four years.

"Unlike the Labor Party which sent economic stimulus cheques to deceased people during the global financial crisis, our Liberal National Government will always treat taxpayers' money with respect and work hard to keep our welfare system fair and sustainable."

“Until now the Department of Human Services has largely relied on the voluntary reporting of the death of a pensioner by a family member or friend.”

Mr Fletcher said the United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, France and Italy have systems in place to verify whether a pensioner living overseas is still alive.

Affected pensioners will receive an initial letter from the Australian Department of Human Services in the second half of 2019 giving them further information.

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