

Survivors Pensions

Pensions are payable to widows with dependent children under age 16, to widows without dependent children if they are at least age 50, or were at least 45 when their last child reached 16 and, for 26 weeks, to widows under age 50 who have no dependent children but are in "necessitous" circumstances. For the first two groups the term "widow" includes deserted wives, divorcees, a woman whose husband has been in jail for 6 months, and women whose husbands are in mental hospitals. Orphans pensions are payable to the widowed mother along with the widow's pension.

The residence qualification for a widow's pension is five years continuous residence in Australia immediately prior to the date of claim, but this period may be reduced to one year if the widow and her husband were living permanently in Australia when he died.

For widows with dependent children the maximum pension in 1964 is £7 15s. weekly. For those age 50, or over age 45 when the last child reached age 16, who do not have dependent children in their care, the maximum rate of pension is £5 2s. 6d. weekly. A similar weekly amount is payable for 26 weeks to the young widow in "necessitous" circumstances without a child in her care. Orphans pensions are payable with the widow's pension at a maximum rate of 15s. a week.

A funeral grant of up to £10 is payable to a person who has paid or is responsible for paying the cost of the funeral of an age or invalid pensioner or of a person who, but for his death, would be entitled to an age or invalid pension.

Means Test

Age and invalid pensions (other than those paid to blind persons) and allowances paid to wives of pensioners in receipt of an invalid pension (but not the child's supplements) are subject to a means test which takes into account both property and income. The means of an applicant comprises his income plus a property component equal to £1 a year for every complete £10 of the value of his property above £200. When a beneficiary's means exceed £182 a year (£3 10s. a week,) for a single person and £364 a year (£7 a week) for married couples, pensions are reduced by the amount by which the pensioner's or the couple's means exceed these amounts.

The means test applied to widows' pensions varies slightly with respect to the treatment of property. Where applicable, the property component is £1 for every £10 of property above £1000. However, for widows over age 50 without dependent children the means test corresponds to that applied for age and invalidity pensions.

Other Benefits

In addition to age, invalidity, and survivor pensions, the Australian social security provides income maintenance benefits to aged persons under a program designed to encourage rehabilitation of handicapped or injured persons. The Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service provides treatment and training to persons whose disability is remediable. The service is available to widows and invalid pensioners and other recipients of social services benefits. During treatment the payment of pension or benefits continues. When vocational training start the pension or benefit ceases and a rehabilitation allowance is paid.

Administration

The social services outlined above are administered by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services. The Department has 23 regional offices, each under the control of a Registrar of Social Services. Most of the regional offices were established about 1948, although some commenced later as the need developed.