

SENIOR FARMERS CAMPAIGN AGAINST UNFAIR AGE PENSION ASSETS TEST

A national campaign has been started from Manjimup WA to repeal new and old laws that will strip part pension farmers of \$13,000 a year and drive them off their farms into cities and towns onto full pensions. 23% of farmers are over the age of 65 and changes to the Assets Test for the Age Pension mean many will have part pensions reduced from \$15,000 to \$2,000 while seniors in cities with similar assets will have pensions of \$33,000. Senior farmers are being encouraged to put their sitting member of the Turnbull Government last on the ballot paper unless the discriminatory law is repealed.

Convener of Senior Farmers, Neil Bartholomaeus of Manjimup said farmers were unfairly treated under the Assets Test for the Age Pension because only their home and two hectares of land was excluded from Assets, the rest of the farmland on the same title was included. He said their campaign was aimed at excluding all of the farmland on the same title as the home from the Assets Test.

Mr Bartholomaeus said ABS data shows that 40% of farms have annual production of only \$50,000 or less. Many senior farmers struggle on low income and the Age Pension is important to them, so they can stay on their farm and be productive.

“There are 427 suburbs in Australia where the median home and land price is over \$1 million in value and seniors in those homes can receive part and full pensions because the home and land is totally exempt from the Assets Test.

“In contrast, senior farmers are discriminated against because, other than two hectares, all of the land adjacent to their home is included in the Assets Test, even though it may be worth much less than the mega property values in cities.

“This discrimination against senior farmers in the Assets Test has applied for many years but has been made intolerable with recent changes to the thresholds for assets.

“This injustice to farmers must be ended before the next Federal Election,” Mr Bartholomaeus said.

In a letter last week to Christian Porter, Minister for Social Services, Mr Bartholomaeus requested that where a home is on the same title as the farm land, both should be exempted from the Assets Test for the Age Pension, and the *Social Security Act 1991* be amended accordingly.

Mr Bartholomaeus added in the letter that if the unfair and discriminatory law is not repealed by the next Federal Election, it would be justifiable that senior farmers put their sitting Member of the Turnbull Government last on the ballot paper.

(For further information please refer to www.seniorfarmers.com and email contact@seniorfarmers.com)