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## Reforming the Disability Support Pension

14 December 2011

**Joint Media Release with:**

**Senator Jan Mclucas**, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers

A new report released today confirms the Gillard Government's reforms to better target the Disability Support Pension (DSP) are working.

Over the last three budgets, the Government has initiated a series of reforms that are fundamentally overhauling key aspects of the disability support pension.

The report, *Characteristics of Disability Support Pension Recipients June 2011*, profiles the 818,850 people receiving the DSP in June 2011 and demonstrates the effects the Government's reforms are having.

The report shows that the growth rate for the DSP is falling, with a 1.4 per cent drop in the rate between June 2010 to June 2011, compared with the previous year.

The rate of growth in the overall DSP population this year was the lowest it has been in the past three years.

Overall, since the Government's reforms began on 1 July 2010, the rate at which DSP claims are granted has fallen from 63.3 per cent to 51.8 per cent in October 2011, a drop of more than 11 percentage points.

While the DSP will continue to be an important part of our social safety net, the Government believes we can do better than a lifetime spent on income support for Australians who have some capacity to work.

That's why our reforms to the DSP include:

- Eligibility for DSP is now assessed by experienced assessors using new, clearer guidelines to determine the work capacity of applicants.
- Fast tracking claims for manifest and severely disabled applicants so they get support quicker;
- Improving the adequacy of the base pension, especially for singles;
- Increased incentives to give work a try by removing punitive rules that discourage use of disability employment services;
- Removing waiting lists for access to disability employment services by uncapping places; and
- Establishing a new Health Professional Advice Unit within the Department of Human Services to give DSP assessors independent advice on medical issues in DSP assessments.

The Government is also investing over \$3 billion over the next four years through uncapping access to Disability Employment Services, so people with disability can more easily get help to find work.

In addition, from 1 January next year, people who apply for the DSP will be assessed under revised Impairment Tables

The Impairment Tables are used in DSP assessments to measure how a person's impairment affects their ability to work.

They were last reviewed in 1993 and contain anomalies and inconsistencies which have distorted the assessment process.

The revised Impairment Tables are consistent with modern medical and rehabilitation practice and can be viewed at: <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/benefits-payments/disability-support-pension-dsp-better-and-fairer-assessments/review-of-the-tables-for-the-assessment-of-work-related-impairment-for-disability-support-pension/social-security-tables-for-the>

The Characteristics of Disability Support Pension Recipients report can be viewed at: <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/publications-articles/policy-research/characteristics-of-disability-support-pension-recipients/characteristics-of-disability-support-pension-recipients-2011>