

OPEN LETTER TO TONY BLAIR

**To the Rt. Hon. Tony Blair,
Prime Minister of Great Britain
From the
British Australian Pensioner Association**

Dear Mr Blair,

Some years ago, when the Labour Party was in opposition in Britain, you sent a reply, personally signed, to one of our members which gave hope that when the Labour Party returned to office it would give a sympathetic hearing to the unjust denial of pension indexation for half Britain's expatriate pensioners overwhelmingly living in the major Commonwealth countries.

Regrettably, on gaining office you ignored a recommendation made by the Social Services Select Committee that the matter be resolved by a free vote in prime time with the Whips off.

At that time more than 200 Labour MPs had signed Early Day Motions in favour of indexing. The probability was that there would have been a vote in our favour, and the frozen pension issue would have been decided.

Since then your Party has continued to avoid the issue in Parliament. Now British pensioners in South Africa have brought a case against the British Government in the High Court under the new Human Rights Act 1998

Legal opinion indicates that you have a high risk of losing the case, with the Court not just quashing the offending regulations, but conceivably awarding the affected pensioners billions of pounds in back pay under Convention Clause 41, "Just Satisfaction". But more painful than the cash cost will be the humiliation to you personally, to your party, and to Britain, of having UK policy publicly condemned as unjust and inhumane.

We ask you to take the opportunity offered by our Queen's Jubilee to circumvent those court proceedings by announcing that the 4% of British pensioners currently denied indexation will, in future, receive pension parity with the remaining 96%.

How opportune it would be if you were to make this announcement at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. Of the 460,000 British expatriates with frozen pensions, the vast majority live in one or other of 48 of the 54 Commonwealth countries, 224,000 of them here in Australia.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Havard. President

British Australian Pensioner Association, Box 35 Christies Beach, South Australia 5165
Member of the World Alliance of British Expatriate Pensioners Australia Canada New Zealand South Africa Zimbabwe