

I would like to make a personal submission to the enquiry as a person living with a disability for 54 years. I am legally blind and hearing impaired as a result of a motor vehicle accident which I experienced when I was 2 years old. I am married with 3 primary school aged children. I work full time and have a mortgage. I have an interest in living a full and fulfilling life and providing opportunities for a quality education for my children.

I receive the free of the means test, non taxable Disability Support Pension (Blind) which has provided me with income support to pay for the non optional costs of my disability such as using taxis because I don't drive and for paying for help around our home to do things such as mowing the lawns which I am unable to do within a reasonable time frame. I believe that receiving this income support has allowed me to have a surety of income which has allowed me to study and do the things that have allowed me to prepare myself to hold a full time job in local government and be a contributing member of the community. I would ask that the Disability Support Pension (Blind) be continued and run in parallel with any new support scheme for people with disabilities.

I believe the new scheme should be provided in an incremental way to assist a person with a disability to achieve assessed needs based outcomes such as a payment or support for finding a job or achieving an education etc.

I would also ask that the person with a disability be placed in the centre of decision making around their involvement with any new scheme. i.e. the person must decide how they want to go about achieving their goals and be provided with the support to make decisions. I am also in favour of a brokerage system which is independent and available to assist a person with a disability to make choices.

I also believe that a new scheme should include support for the development and strengthening of a flexible advocacy framework which is run by people with disabilities for people with disabilities. Blind Citizens Australia is a good example of this.

I would be pleased to make myself available to expand further on any of the issues I have raised in this submission. I would also appreciate any correspondence relating to this submission be by email preferably in a word based format to the email address below as I use screen reading software.

Yours Sincerely

Chris Stewart