Inquiry into
Disability and
Care and
Support

1/5/2011

To Whom It May Concern,

As you know I made a submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability care and Support and since then I also recently attended the public hearing here in Melbourne where I addressed the meeting to have my say. I pretty much spelled out my case showing how people fall through the cracks of funding for aids and equipment and long term care over many years because of the lack of support from the current government and previous governments that have been in power.

Whilst the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support is a positive step in the right direction, I really hope it is going to have positive outcomes for people like myself who have been living in the community for 22 years without adequate support for basic needs.

As I pointed out to the Commission it should be every man and woman's right in this country to go to the toilet for free, which is something every able bodied person takes for granted, but is certainly not the case for all of us with the a disability . Therefore if TAC or Workcare accidents compensation covers the likes of incontinence aids for life as well as other equipment, then as a basic human right for people like myself with a no fault and non compensated accidents should also be covered fully for this basic need by the Government, anything less than that is simply not good enough. Right now it is not a level playing field for everybody, the level of care and support is being determined by how you have your accident and it is not fair or ethical. I believe it is discrimination to not cover everybody fairly.

Recently the Continence Aids and Assistance Scheme (CAAS) has been replaced by the new CAPS which as you would know is paid to us directly through Medicare and is supposed to give us more choice and flexibility of purchase, this however is not the case. What has happened is the suppliers have put up their prices which were once government subsidized. Some items have increase by 25% and up to 50% depending on the item for example a Urisure condom, which I use two per day, was a $ 1.93 is now $2.41 a rise of about 25%. A disinfectant Milton which I also use has gone from $17 to $28 a rise of over 50%. Apart from this the companies are now charging for freight where as the old system they never did so. How do you expect pensioners like myself to go on paying for this equipment with price rises such as this with the cost of everything else such as groceries, gas and electricity prices sky rocketing, yet the CAPS allowance does not go up accordingly?

So you can see this new system is failing us we are now getting less equipment for the allowance and still it doesn't go up near enough each year to cover the amount of supplies needed for this basic human right. I called the CAPS number to formally complain about this and at a later date spoke with Russell de Burgh from the office of the Minister for Mental Health and Aging Mark Butler and told him about the fact that CAPS has created a situation whereby people are now worse off. Russell had initially replied to my letter to the Minister saying that the allowance had CPI rises. When I spoke to him I pointed out to him that this rise had only come in the last few years and was not indexed since the start of CAAS back in 1992. Had this been done we would probably be getting a fare amount in our allowance to cover the full cost of incontinence aids , but because this has been left unchecked we have to pay the price. Surely these aids should be supplied by the government for severely disabled cases on a needs be basis signed off by a medical Doctor. He said he would take my concerns and express them to the Minister, hopefully he has done so. I sincerely hope that the Minister would actively seek to do something about it, because previously governments and associated bureaucrats have done nothing.

I have received the draft report from the Productivity Commission, in particular I have read through chapter 15, and most of it talks about litigation and compensation but there is nothing there that talks about what outcomes might be available for long term injured people like myself who were no fault cases and any solutions to equal the playing field as far as aids and equipment go. This is what we are wanting to hear from your Government, actual extra funding to cover people for basic human rights and more care hours to enable them to live in the community independently and safely.

So far as well as writing to Mark Butler I have written to Nicola Roxon, Jenny Macklin, Julia Gillard, Kate Lundy, Jan McLucas and Bill Shorten about these issues. The only person who has been more than willing to meet with me was Bill Shorten. He was very sympathetic to what I had revealed to him and he couldn’t believe the differences of funding because of the nature of the accident. I believe he was very active in attempting to bring about positive change for people with disabilities. I certainly hope Mark Butler will also be a politician that will stand up for people with disabilities to have their basic human rights covered by your government. We really need the help of such politicians with this for the sake of the many people living with spinal cord injury in Australia.

Without politicians standing up for people with disabilities, this issue will just get swept under the mat and nothing will ever be done about it.

Yours sincerely

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