DATE: Thursday, 27 May 2010

Disability Care and Support Inquiry
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
CANBERRA CITY 2601
ACT

I am in receipt of a Disability Support Pension, and have been in receipt of a Disability Support Pension for the past six years; prior to which I was in receipt of a Newstart Allowance, having to undergo, at considerable personal expense, ongoing Medical Certificates to verify my condition to Centrelink to meet Centrelink's criteria. Therefore I believe that I am in a position to offer my thoughts and suggestions to this Inquiry, although my whole experience with all Government agencies throughout my process has left me more than sceptical and of the opinion that this Inquiry will also not take any notice at all of any 'public' submission, having already decided the outcome well in advance, with the 'process' of submissions being mere sham or window dressing to maintain the illusion of the democratic process. And why do I state this? Because <u>not once</u> in my ten years of sickness, unemployment and disability has any Government body contacted me to notify me of governmental services, programs or help that I could be eligible for. Instead, I have had to find out myself whatever information I can, while coping with my disability on my own and my lack of finance and housing troubles, having long given up on the meagre services and long waiting lists offered to those of us who live away from Australia's major cities in obviously what has long been regarded by bureaucrats and politicians as the boon-docks and slums of Australia instead of that colloquial Aussie bush!

Firstly, because my disability is primarily of a mental health nature, I have constantly been refused help from Mental Health Services because I do not take anti-depressant medication, as my injury is traumatic in nature and not primarily psychological. To receive help from NSW

Mental Health the taking of anti-depressant medication is prerequisite, as if the multi-billion dollar pharmaceutical industry now dictates Government policy on this matter instead of well researched neurological and scientific data, no matter the side effects the mentally disabled suffers because of the medication. And Government agencies simply refuse to accept neurological data on those with permanent trauma to their brain and/or permanent damage created through 'nurture' experiences: epigenetic, pre-natal, post-natal, post traumatic injury.

Secondly, unlike the professional politician, the psychologist, psychiatrist, and those appointed to this Inquiry, those like myself who are forced to survive on a Disability Support Pension and who pay rent for somewhere to live, on an income that has been well below the Henderson Poverty line for over ten years, it is almost impossible for us to have any say in this Inquiry because of the prohibitive personal financial cost involved. After-all, no politician who has tried has succeeded for even a week to live on this pathetic income. And this Inquiry, advertised by Government in May 2010, already had the dates set for these so-called 'public hearings' booked for as early as 07 June to 22 July 2010, giving the Disabled Beneficiary no time at all to save enough from their meagre pension to afford the transport to and from such 'hearings' if they lived outside of the State capitals, like myself. (Viz-a-viz, the outcome has already been decided!) For rent alone has gone up by an average of over $100 per week over the past five years where-as the rent assistance paid to the Beneficiary has only gone up by a little over $7 per week over this same time period, leaving the Disabled Pensioner, on average, some $93 per week worse of than they were six years ago. (And that's a whooping $4,836 per annum worse off by the way!) To ignore this most primary of facts is simply like sticking ones head in the sand, and therefore, those who do so should probably be treated and diagnosed with their own form of mental disability if not a dangerous anti-social psychopathic predisposition!

For myself, paying $30 per day to live in a caravan . . . and for those of you who can't do the math, that's $210 per week or $420 per fortnightly Disability payment, after paying for rent, gas, transport, food and basic sanitation, insurance, and phone, I have nothing left to live on. How one manages to afford the luxury of the Internet and Email living on a Disability Support Pension simply beggars belief, and those of us like myself who can't are simply further cut off from mainstream Australia to become third class (or counting our disability should that fourth class) citizens!

The suggestions I wish to make to this Inquiry therefore are ones that come from the point of view of those like myself who merely survive on a Disability Support Pension.

1. Centrelink, being the arm of Social Security that pays the Benefit to the Disabled client should therefore be primarily responsible for those who suffer a Disability, instead of creating yet another ministry and yet another layer of Government bureaucracy at incredible expense to the taxpayer.

   Centrelink should therefore be responsible for notifying the Disabled client on a regular basis; even if through the mail with a fortnightly statement when the Disability Support Pension is paid, all information as to what help and services provided by government to the Disabled are, maintaining a close relationship with the Disabled person, even if this is farmed out through other governmental or community based organisations who are properly trained and qualified to assist and empathise with the disabled and their carer, if they have one, while being ever mindful of the exorbitant cost of transport to those

who live in remote areas or where public transport is non-existent.

2. Instead of creating a typically banana republic 'Cuban-like' rort of a system where those who can pay for 'extras' receive better treatment while those who can't basically starve for treatment, everyone paid under the Centrelink system for a Disability must receive exactly the same degree of service , . . or simply opt out of the Centrelink system and fully pay for their own private coverage if and when they have a Disability. This, after-all, is the current basis of the Medicare system and Private Medical Funds, is it not? Anything else is simply an open invitation to corruption and special interest groups just like Fidel Castro's Cuba.

3. If a 'new' Governmental organisation is going to be set up to specifically handle the Disabled, as I suspect has already been decided, then at the very least the vast majority employed within it should surely be the disabled themselves, or carers of the disabled and not the bureaucrat or ex-Politician. Because it is only the disabled or their carers who intimately know, and live with and work with this condition and who can fully empathise with other Disability sufferers.
   Government bureaucrats simple are not skilled and can never be sufficiently skilled in managing the disabled, just as those working in the finance industries do not employ cleaners and undertakers to manage banking firms or major corporations, and those who operate a mining industry have a first hand mining experience themselves. Or am I simply being too common sense for this Commission of Inquiry, probably already salivating over another layer of bureaucracy and jobs for the boys or family members!

4. The final point and suggestion I wish to make is this: If the goal of this Inquiry, as set out by Government Ministers, is actually to find, and I quote; '*. . . the best solutions to improve care and support services for people with a disability* . .' end quote, and not, as I suspect, to slash the Pensions budget spent on those with a Disability by removing the Disabled from their Pension and forcing them to repetitive and menial work for third world slave wages, then and surely then one has to ask the question; What the hell has the Australian Government and its bureaucracy been doing for the past twenty years and why therefore have the CEO's of this bureaucracy not been sacked or severely disciplined? And on top of that question, if Government truly wants to admit that for all of those years it has miserably failed those of us who live with a Disability then where the hell is our compensation package and very public apology? If both of these questions are not addressed by this Inquiry then this further goes to show the actual intent of the Inquiry; namely to slash spending on the Disabled and create a system in Australia that apes the abject failure of America's, sending more and more Disabled into a criminal justice system, especially in the case of the mentally Disabled, where over eighty percent of all American inmates have some form of diagnosed mental Disability. So instead of being seen as suffering a disability, those with mental health issues are regarded as mere criminals, costing the taxpayer much much more than the miserly Benefit they had received previously and denying the disabled their democratic rights to freedom, equality and justice, and compensation available to all others! And until the Australian Government comes to grips with this, the better out-come for those of us who are Disabled is a mere illusion created by the politician!

Hopefully through this, my submission to the Inquiry, a little of my Mental Disability can be seen through the colour of my words. And since the Long Term Disability Care and Support

Scheme terms of reference for this Inquiry has not even had the 'guts', decency or foresight to explain and break down the term 'Severely' Disabled, which has been employed over and over in the terms of reference to this Inquiry, the so-called stated focus of this Inquiry, I for one am extremely concerned that all of us who are in receipt of a Disability Support Pension are now clearly in the bureaucrats and Governmental razor-gang sights.

As that famous book, the 'Art Of War' by Sun-tzu, employed by all politicians and corporate giants, clearly states;

The art of war is the art of deception.
The end justifies the means.
Nurture fear and distrust.
Say the opposite to what you mean.

In these horrible words of this horribly unenlightened man I foresee that the real aim of this Inquiry is to strip from the Disabled Pensioner, not to enhance their lifestyle.

And in this premonition and statement may I be proved wrong.