

To the Joint Committee,

I am writing to you in regards to the parliamentary inquiry into the DSP reviews.

I am currently a DSP recipient under review. I have had CFS/ME since 1987, and have been on the DSP since 2010. I also have Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome, diabetes insipidus, myoclonus, severe IBS, gastroparesis, non epileptic seizures with full body tetany, anxiety and depression.

My doctor is hopeful that I will keep the DSP, but of course there are no guarantees, as Centrelink's criteria are very strict. The review has been very detrimental to my physical and mental health. I do understand the government's need to review recipients, but the manner in which they are doing so is causing undue harm and expense. I believe it is cruel and designed to make it difficult for recipients.

I would make the following recommendations for the review system.

1. Give patients and doctors more time to prepare reports. Three weeks is an unreasonable amount of time for patients and doctors to prepare the highly detailed reports that are required, especially given that most recipients are sick and/or disabled and quickly accessing and paying for doctor visits can be extremely challenging. A further three week extension of this time can be requested, however, even this is too limited a time frame.
2. That Centrelink staff review files of those recipients chosen for review before sending out review letters. It would lessen taxpayer expense and patient trauma if those with obvious permanent disability were eliminated from the review process.
3. That those recipients classed as not being able to work, yet not fully treated be permitted to remain on the DSP and given sufficient time to source treatment, before a completion of their review. Given the nature of waiting times in the health system, I would recommend a year be given. It is in my opinion incredibly cruel to remove the DSP from patients who are clearly too ill to work, simply because they aren't currently receiving a possible treatment. This leaves the patient in a cruel limbo. They are too sick/disabled to work, and they no longer have the finances to get treatment. For some people this quandary may result in death from lack of treatment or by their own hand.

I fully appreciate the need for the government to rein in expenses, and fears of a welfare blowout. I have been a recipient of various welfare payments for much of my life since I was

a teenager. However, I didn't choose to become sick at such a young age, and I certainly wouldn't ask to be on the DSP unless I truly needed it. Sadly, my CFS/ME is now severe, and recovery unlikely. My doctor and I agree that if I lose the DSP I am likely to die. I could of course appeal, but I'm not sure I could cope with this process with my fragile health.

Please forgive the somewhat scattered and disjointed letter that I have submitted. As a very sick patient, writing this letter was very important to me, however doing so was very challenging.

I would like to say thank you to Julian Hill for raising this issue, and to all those involved in the parliamentary inquiry.