

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2010 (Changes to Disability Support Pension)

SUBMISSION

SUBMISSION NUMBER: 2

SUBMITTER

Julian Donn

I'd like the Committee to consider the following while they are examining the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2010 which will give Centrelink the right to remove residency from Australian citizens, in this case Disability Support Pensioners, who spend too much time out side of Australia.

1) Thousands of Australian Disability Support Pension recipients, for reasons of their own, like to spend as much time as possible overseas.

They may have families there, they may find it cheaper than to struggle on the pension in Australia or they may just be exercising their right as a free Australian citizen to come and go as they please.

Please don't take this right off them. There is no value to the Government in making people a prisoner in their own country.

2) This will be an expensive exercise; most of the expatriate pensioners cannot claim rent allowance, phone allowance or pharmaceutical allowance a total of around three thousand dollars a year.

They buy their prescription drugs over the counter without benefit of concessions and use local doctors, freeing up the Australian public health system.

Should they return to Australia many will apply to bring partners and families, currently living on a single pension. I know of a legally blind pensioner in Cambodia with two children under the age of five. Work out what that will cost the taxpayer over the next twenty years.

3) When the Social Security Act of 1991 was changed in 2003 many Australians living outside the country were "grandfathered" or granted exemption from the new legislation, this allowed thousands of Disability Support Pensioners to legally live outside Australia.

Australians not currently covered under this system should be offered an opportunity to take advantage of it.

4) Finally I'd like the Committee to consider what advantage there is to the Australian taxpayer in restricting the movements of these people.

I understand that many will be made to partake in retraining schemes in an effort to get them back into the workforce at some level.

This is quite acceptable, but disabled pensioners who are considered unemployable and who are deemed to be of no potential use to the workforce should be allowed to live out their lives unrestricted.

Give us a fair go.

Julian Donn