

Dear Sirs/Mesdames,

We wish to draw your attention to what has been a difficult experience for 2 family members entrusted with a Powers of Attorney for a close family member [aged 93 and in care.] Centrelink "demanded" further information, and in endeavouring to comply, the other Pof A Holder was advised that one needed to obtain 100 points for ID for said relative, who had been, up until the sale of only asset (family home) receiving an aged pension and held a health care card. Briefly, CentreLink claimed these documents were not valid evidence, because they issued them. Surely this is ridiculous.

Then we were told CentreLink needed to see some of the following documents: the family member's passport; full extract of birth certificate, or driver's licence, a current rate notice, power, gas bill, evidence of being on the electoral roll.

1. Passport expired well over 10 years ago and was not renewed
2. At hand we only have the Extract of Birth, not the full one, as required these days, but this takes some time to organise.
3. Never held a driving licence.
4. Family home sold therefore being the only asset, relative has none of the bills/notices requested, that is current ones. We have a phone account only which is worth some points, but more are required.
5. Called Electoral Commission and this is the sorry saga that transpired:

Advised they would send me a form in the mail and that if I faxed it back (fax number was given) with the Power of Attorney, then sent the originals in the mail, they would provide evidence of enrolment. Eventually the form arrived on Tuesday this week, completed same the following day. "Something" told us to double check with the AEC main Vic. office, which was done. Don't fax it here you need to fax it the relevant AEC office in the electorate in which the family member now resides. I then requested the phone number for this office - supplied. Called this AEC office and was advised no, we can't issue you evidence, your relative must sign the form. Explained 2 family members had Power of Attorney, close family member is 93, etc, and the last time the aged person was requested to sign something, they became distressed, agitated and extremely upset and rightly said: "why are you asking me this, you two have the paper (Power of A.) to deal with all this. I've done it all for years, etc.." which this person did when they had ill/aged close relatives.

I would like the Sub-Committee to consider some avenues for those with Power of Attorney being able to complete the paperwork required and, providing they furnish a Certified copy of the relevant Power of Attorney to the AEC, that should be sufficient. It would, I imagine, be a simple exercise for the AEC to check, that both those holding the Power of Attorney are themselves enrolled, etc. ask their Medicare numbers, contact the aged person's solicitor..

The experiences with CentreLink have been a total source of frustration, and I would appreciate this email being forwarded to the relevant Minister/s to review the procedures in due course. Upon the sale of said relatives only asset, the family home, one of the holders of the PofA submitted all documentation, having phoned first to see what needed to be done, having also consulted with relative's lawyer.. Other Pof A holder arrived at the appointed time, submitted all documentation and I recall they requested more at that point, which was duly provided. Then when July 1st arrived and the treatment of the accommodation bond changed in the laws, the papers had to be re-submitted - all of them - anew. This is ludicrous. We had requested Centrelink to not correspond with the aged relative and to direct all mail to one Power of Attorney holder "A". They assured us this would be done - "see it's on the screen". Then aged relative received at aged care facility, a letter "demanding" further information and the 100 point check by X date. To which we had to request an extension, this was granted but PofA "A" was told that was it, no more extensions - having only requested one! Our relative was extremely upset by this letter and felt as if they were being treated like a common criminal.

I respectfully request that both departments look seriously at how they treat the elderly, who have been astute enough earlier in their ageing years, to put in place a Power of Attorney, such as when they no longer wish to be bothered, distressed or simply can't cope, or are perhaps not of sound mind, the people given this Power of A. be allowed, within the law & within reason, to carry out the duties required of them. It seems today, we are reduced to numbers and distrust of all, because of a few.

Surely sanity needs to prevail. The relative concerned has no assets, other than that from the sale of the family home. The holders of the Pof A for this relative are in touch with relative's lawyer as and when needed, we have sought advice as to the current laws regarding sale of assets and how that would impinge on one's aged benefits, which of course it does - and that is the law and we are abiding by same, but to have to endure the "circus" of Centrelink and the experience with the AEC - is not good enough.

We are fortunate to live in the best country in the world - something of which we're appreciative. But this .....

Further, one of us needed Photographic ID to provide to my aged relative's bank. And this Pof A has none that is current, so it was suggested one obtain a key-card. Obtained the form, then oh dear - need your current passport. Expired. Again this is silly. Someone in "their wisdom" suggested - always carry your passport and the power of attorney on your person. Another ludicrous suggestion - that would be irresponsible in the extreme. Hence the key-card. So now one needs to spend money obtaining their passport, in order to obtain the key-card. Apparently, ID from one's own bank, a medicare card, private health insurance card, and a confirmation of employment and length of service letter were all deemed unsuitable.

Thank you for your time in reading what was originally intended be a brief missive. Apologies for covering so many subjects/departments, but it transpires that we are not "pat-malone" in coming up against these situations. Surely common sense must prevail.

Yours faithfully,