

17/02/27/11/09

Laure

Dear Ms Ellis,

I am writing to you regarding the situation for fulltime carers. Carers really do need more respite hours,

The couple of hours a week or 2 to 3 hours every 2 weeks is really **Not** enough at all.

By doing this, the government has structured a system that allows carers to become very

Run down and Stressed out.

People need time out to themselves as a proper break, to not get depressed or become socially isolated. Most IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH REASONS

I cannot believe Parliament House has ignored this problem for years, The Howard years were the same.

Carers, who devote fulltime care after 7 days 24 hrs deserve at least $\frac{1}{2}$ a day, that's, 12 HOURS Not even a full day, unfortunately, to help look after their mental and physical wellbeing, that's you

simply
time

Will things improve with Labour in power?

THE AUSTRALIAN

GREENS
VIEW.

Rachel Siewert

Budget delivers little respite for carers ✓

Media Release | Spokesperson Rachel Siewert

Thursday 15th May 2008, 12:00am

in Budget Carers

The Rudd Government has not delivered enough for carers in the budget, say the Australian Greens.

"After all of Mr Rudd's assurances about protecting carers in this budget, he has failed to live up to those promises," said Senator Rachel Siewert.

"Many carers are still expected to live on substantially less than the federal minimum wage. The first Rudd budget does nothing to improve the standard of living of those carers who are doing it tough."

"Carers who are reliant on receiving the carer payment plus the carer allowance saw their income rise by less than 3.5 per cent in the year to March 2008. However, over that same period, the percentage rise of essential cost of living items such as bread, milk, rent and electricity was more than double that."

"Although there has been a welcome increase in respite care, if we actually had a systematic and strategic approach to supporting carers, they would not need as much respite. As usual, the Government are treating the symptoms, not the causes," said Senator Siewert.

"While of course we support giving more money to carers, we have deep reservations about a system based on one-off payments. We need to be increasing the weekly payments to Carers, and putting in place better long-term support. Once again we have a government that has failed to adequately address the real needs of carers in our community." *In the meantime Our Health is truly at RISK*

"Carers in this country deserve so much more. They deserve a government that is prepared to take seriously the difficulties faced by carers trying to make ends meet on inadequate support in a time of rising inflation," she said.

"We needed to systematically address the structure of support we have in place for carers, in order to improve their financial security and quality of life. With a growing number of people requiring care this is becoming, more and more, a critical and crucial issue," concluded Senator Siewert.

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Rachel Siewert

Caring for Carers

Speech | Spokesperson Rachel Siewert

Wednesday 14th September 2005, 12:00am

in Carers People with a Disability

The matter of public interest I rise to speak on today is the specific issue of accommodation and support services for people with disabilities. In doing so, I also want to highlight issues surrounding the philosophy and approach taken by the coalition to the wider issues of social services, to highlight its hypocrisy and to point out why this approach will not deliver on the goals it purports to be pursuing.

Let me start with a very general point. The Prime Minister, John Howard, is very keen on the idea that everyone should stand on their own two feet. The essence of this philosophy is one of encouraging independence, and the ultimate goal is to have more Australians working and fewer Australians receiving welfare of some sort. However, when it comes to the issue of support services for Australians with disabilities and their carers, this philosophy of self-reliance seems to fall down. I am prepared to be generous here and suggest that this problem is more a case of disinterest and neglect than deliberate marginalisation. I cannot be so generous on the wider issues of Welfare to Work and the so-called industrial relations reforms. *YES, ITS SO TRUE*

The people we are talking about here, the carers of Australia and people with disabilities, epitomise this philosophy of self-reliance. They take on huge workloads and tackle massive impediments in their efforts to be independent and to look after their families and themselves. Where is the support for these people who are taking on what would otherwise be taken on by and be a burden on the community? Where are their incentives? What is there in place for people with disabilities who actively want to hold down a job, to have their own home and to live as independently as they can? This is the hypocrisy of the government's approach.

They are not offering help to people who wish to be self-reliant. They are not offering enough incentives to people who want to get off welfare and into work, to gain meaningful employment, to improve their standard of living and ultimately fund their own retirement. They are offering perverse disincentives and creating further barriers. They are making the whole process of looking for work or seeking to be independent complicated, stressful, disempowering, frustrating, confusing and depressing. In 2002, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated that, for every one person with a disability who was able to access support from the existing service system, another six to 24 people were being turned away. *SO TRUE, Again*

I particularly wish to draw the attention of the Senate to the accommodation support crisis for people with disabilities and their families. I must say that I am wary of using the word 'crisis' in this context, as we in the chamber have come to learn that everything can and will be called a crisis, and we quickly develop crisis fatigue. However, I put to you that, in the area of accommodation support for people with disabilities, there is a very dire situation that is worthy of the term 'crisis'.

I would just like to point out a few of the horrifying statistics. In New South Wales, there are an estimated 8,000 people with unmet needs for accommodation support. In Victoria, approximately 4,478 people are listed as in need of accommodation support. In Queensland, 5,117 people are listed as requiring accommodation support-an unmet need. In Western Australia, I am pleased to report, the situation is slightly better; however, it is still extremely distressing, as 225 people had an unmet need in 2001. In 2002-03, 330 people applied for accommodation support. Only 92 of them-28 per cent-were successful. That means the rest were not successful. It is almost a race to the bottom-in other words, who has the biggest crisis? The carers have to tell their stories so intensely, as in this race to the bottom the person who has the worst case wins, which is not a satisfactory situation to put carers in. *And Again, its SO TRUE*

We are facing a critical shortfall in supported accommodation services for people with disabilities all across Australia. This is having a devastating impact on people with disabilities and their families. People born with a disability are being denied the opportunity to leave the family home and live independent lives with the support that they need. Parents and family carers are expected to care till they drop, sacrificing their physical and mental health, their marriages, their other children's welfare, their employment and their retirement. Young adults who acquire a disability through injury or illness and who can no longer manage to live independently are being forced to live in nursing homes for elderly people. The human rights of people with disabilities and their families are being ignored. This crisis is demeaning to our whole community. **SO TRUE.**

We believe that our community expects real opportunities for all its members. We believe that our community expects that people with disabilities will receive the assistance they need to live a decent life, to have a fair go and to have a chance.

The original CSDA, or Commonwealth-state disability agreement, clearly stated that funding for accommodation was to be a shared responsibility between the Commonwealth and the states, while the administration of accommodation support was to be a state responsibility. This provision has been watered down in the subsequent CSTDA agreement, or the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement, as it is now called, which has led to a critical shortfall in supported accommodation services. However, even within the provisions of the existing CSTDA there is a range of important responsibilities placed on the Commonwealth to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are being met. Subsequently, there is scope for the minister to show leadership in resolving this crisis.

Let me draw your attention to some of the specific provisions within the agreement.

Under the policy provisions of the agreement it states:

In working towards this objective the Commonwealth and the States/Territories recognise- amongst other things, the need to work together to-

a) strengthen access to generic services for people with disabilities by:
fostering a whole-of-government approach to maximise the opportunity for people with disabilities to participate socially and economically in the community ...

It goes on to say:

b) strengthen across government linkages by-

note that it says 'across government linkages'; it does not say 'state linkages'-

positively influencing the service system within and external to the Agreement to ensure that access to appropriate services is supported and strengthened ...

Under the heading 'Shared Commonwealth and State/Territory Roles,' it goes on to list shared responsibilities as:

(e) encouraging reform of the existing service system and supporting innovation and quality in service provision;

(f) working towards the achievement of the objective and policy priorities which underpin the national framework ...

In other words, there is scope for both Commonwealth and state involvement. The states and territories cannot resolve this issue on their own. We need to see real leadership from the Commonwealth on this issue. We need to see real leadership from the Minister for Family and Community Services. We need to see a commitment to tackling this issue head-on, not to passing the buck back and forth between the Commonwealth and the states. We need to see a real commitment to resolving the accommodation support crisis now faced by people with disabilities and their families. We need a real response to this crisis, beginning with an immediate injection of

funding to get assistance to these people in crisis. Real leadership is needed for the Commonwealth to work cooperatively with the states and territories to ensure that the crisis is addressed and that the policy, planning and funding infrastructure is put in place to prevent it happening again.

I AGREE, Again

There is a fantastic opportunity here for the minister to demonstrate to people with disabilities and their families, to the carers of Australia-some of whom are in the gallery today-and to those who travelled from around this nation to take part in the 'Walk a Mile in Our Shoes' event, whom the minister met on the lawns of Parliament House yesterday, her passion, commitment and leadership on this issue, to put her mark on social services and leave a legacy of a just, compassionate and sustainable system. We urge that the CSTDA be revised and altered to ensure that it works to deliver the support services that people with disabilities and their families urgently need. We urge that the indexation provided on Commonwealth grants be increased to match the cost increases experienced by disability service organisations to ensure that the quality of disability support services they provide can be maintained sustainably into the future.

This is what the carers of Australia want: a policy that respects the human rights of people with disabilities and their families; a policy that ensures the availability of appropriate accommodation support to people with disabilities when they need it; a policy that enables families caring for people with disabilities to have the same opportunities as other families to lead a 'normal' life; a policy that enables young people with disabilities to live independently with dignity, respect and the support they need to contribute to, and participate in, the life of their community; a policy that lets young adults with disabilities leave the family home, as do other young adults; a policy that gets young people out of institutions and nursing homes; and a policy that lets families survive, parents work and old people retire. This is a national problem that requires a national solution.

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WITH THE GREENS