

BUDGET ESTIMATES – MAY/JUNE 2011

ATTACHMENT 3

Section: Centrelink
Question: 10
From: Cranbourne Leader
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Diabetes type 1 campaign rattles Centrelink

6 Apr 11 @ 07:00am by Rachel Flaherty

Cranbourne 12-year-old Tess has type 1 diabetes. Her parents had their parents allowance cancelled.

MOTHERS involved in Leader's campaign to win back the carers allowance for parents of children with type 1 diabetes were last week shaken by calls from Centrelink.

NSW mum Amanda Larsen, whose struggle to get an allowance was being closely watched as a test case, said she was distraught after the conversation.

"He told me I was going about things the wrong way (by talking to the media). How dare he?" she said.

"I felt like he was a bit of a bully on the phone and then he asked me what my next step was."

Her lawyer, Christopher Branson, said the Centrelink employee was in contempt of court in regards to Ms Larsen's case and in breach of public service regulations with the other parents.

"It's an utter disgrace," Mr Branson said.

"We live in a democratic society. What are they thinking?"

Mairi-anne Macartney, of Cranbourne, said she felt intimidated by the Centrelink staffer's questions. "He said I had every right to appeal, but the outcome would be the same," she said.

Centrelink general manager Hank Jongen said it was common for staff to contact customers mentioned in media articles to explain decisions and appeal rights.

"Although it's not always possible to change outcomes, as part of our effort to provide a high level of customer service, we will follow up with customers," Mr Jongen said.

He said if someone was not satisfied with the service, they could phone customer relations on 1800 050 004.

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