

I am a parent of an 8 year old girl who is severely intellectually disabled. I am writing in the relation to the proposed imposition of tighter time restrictions on the back-dating of the Carers Allowance.

I know from my own experience that one of the last things on a parent's mind when struggling with the diagnosis and care of a child who is found to have a disability is the extent to which that may make the parent eligible for some kind of government assistance.

This fact, coupled with the lack of information made available to parents with children who are newly diagnosed from medics, therapists and elsewhere, means that parents should be given as much leeway as possible in claiming where they are eligible to do so.

Indeed, to be totally fair to the parent, the payment should be back-dated to the date it can be shown by a medical report that the child's condition satisfies the criteria.

In my capacity as a member of of the NSW Association of Children with a Disability and the Australian Association for Families of Children with a Disability, I am seeking to redress the lack of information available to parents whose children are newly diagnosed with a disability. But our organisations currently receive no Government funding. Our work relies entirely on volunteers and our battle against the silence is slow.

My real concern is that the families who will be most affected by this cut are those that are the most in need since they are usually the ones who struggle to plug into the "disability information network". No one can argue that it is commonly the least educated and/or those least able to understand the system who are in most need of financial assistance.

In my own case, although I am a well-educated member of the community and even though my child was diagnosed as having a disability from 3 months of age, I was not made aware of the Childvare Allowance until my daughter was about 4 years of age and, even then, I was never advised that it could be back-dated.

Katrina Clark