

Subj: **Mr. Elton Humphrey: Community Affairs Committee**  
Date: 10/07/2007  
To: [community.affairs.seen@aph.go.au](mailto:community.affairs.seen@aph.go.au)

The email address given to me by Kevin Rudd failed to deliver, I now submit the stated email via conventional postal methods.

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July 10, 2007.

Good Morning Mr. Humphrey,

I have written several letters to the leader of the opposition Kevin Rudd requesting future assistance for people such as myself forced onto Disability Pensions and consequently not being recognized as worthy Australian citizens trying to make ends meet on an ever shrinking income in a super growth economy.

Truth will soon show that we can no longer cope on such a limited income faced with almost daily increasing cost of living expenses, when even basic essential food items are now becoming an out priced luxury, the lack of Government housing is beyond crisis point and forces us into the private rental market where again we face astronomical outrageous and ever increasing rent hikes which, like everything else, strips and rapes our inadequate meager income on a monthly basis.

My rent alone already takes more than 2/3rds of my fortnightly pension and I am left with less than \$100.00 a fortnight to pay for basic living expenses such as food, medications, petrol, electricity, phone and, God forbid, anything else that crops up.

Clearly we always run out of money long before we run out days within our fortnights. The \$10.00 increase that was just awarded to the lowest wage earners missed the pensioner altogether, although the rise was paltry in comparison to the rise politicians will receive, (Kevin Rudd's increase alone totals 'more' than my entire annual pension) ... the lowest wage earner in Australia now receives TWICE the amount of income that the pensioners receive. The \$522.10 basic wage is also par to the registered 'Poverty Level', yet as a Disability Pensioner, I and those similar to my own situation are supposed to survive on half of what is classed as the minimal income to survive. I could go on and on in this regard trying to explain the plight of all Centrelink beneficiaries, as we are all brethren in the same boat, the crux of my complaint and request to this and in fact 'all' senate committees is that all Government Pensions, be that Aged Pensions or as in my case and enforced Disability Pension, regardless of the label, any pension must be made at least equal to the minimum basic wage, it is dehumanizing and also morally corrupt to believe that anything less might be classed as adequate. Rather than repeat my mantra over and over again, may I instead paste the appropriate extracts of my correspondences to Kevin Rudd to this email, as my personal injuries that are responsible for my predicament do not allow me much tolerance

time sitting, - or standing for that matter, in one position for any length of time, the result of ignoring such warnings places me in sheer agony and laid up possibly for days on end.

I hope your committee has inherited some real teeth and is for once 'fair dinkum', and not just another showboat tissue paper committee trying to justify it's own existence and consequently brush over or ignore the facts once again, in essence, trying to act as though something was actually appearing to be done. The time for committees and idle chatter has long past, we are suffering out here like no previous time in our history, we cannot keep pace with the continuous daily price hikes any longer, as I said to Mr. Rudd, we passed the breaking point more than 18 months ago, its time for immediate action and not chit chat or false promises of 'better things to come' .... our desperate needs are immediate and therefore in need of an immediate response, we are 'Australians In Need', not dissimilar to foreign aid when needed, however, this is home grown extreme hardship that is fixable and fully costed if financial efficiency guidelines are adhered too, the purchase of just one less newly ordered warship would fully cost the increase of pensions to basic wage status, again as said to Mr. Rudd regarding Pensioners in this country, the only difference between them and us is they were here first. We have paid our taxes and thanks to an unjust GST, continue to do so now until death, it is time for the Australian Government to pay back some of what we have provided that has helped make this country what it is today, when literally Billions of Dollars are brought into this country thanks to the mineral boom, fairness and equality in income is all we ask for, this achievable goal would not even put a dent in the swelling treasury coffers.

I now submit to you my requests as shown to Kevin Rudd.

I hope that the committee can acknowledge and respond to this letter if only to let me know it has been received and hopefully acted upon.

My kindest regards

Andrew J.Ball

#### Points of Order

It is said and is quite noteworthy that the only difference between today's pensioners and us is "They were here first", that said, we can only improve the prospects of future generations by supporting and helping those in that situation here and now.

I am a very reluctant disability pensioner struggling with the British High Courts to receive adequate compensation for a work related injury suffered while on a working holiday in the UK in 1999, I was unfortunately the victim of a rusty albeit heavy storm water lid that disappeared underfoot while mowing a lawn as part of my working duties, I fell into a 30 foot storm water drain shaft injuring my lower back, my legs, also crushing my genitals rendering me permanently impotent, damaging my right arm, shoulder and neck, the accident is the sole cause of my marital breakdown through obvious reasons, however I am left to

fight the legal battle alone as I am unable to receive legal aid from Australia because the accident happened and is judged in England, and I am subsequently unable to receive legal aid in the UK because I choose to reside here at home in Australia.

I am trying to voice the thoughts and concerns of some 5 million + pensioners trying to survive on an inadequate shrinking pension, - this might be best viewed as over 5 million voters, such is the obvious genre that should not be overlooked or underestimated, and we are sick and sorry regarding the loose promises of past governments that patronize us with contemptuous false promises of better things to come pre-election then just as quickly forget and discard us as though we were nothing more than second class citizens post election. Our numbers are only recognized prior to an election and that is when the hollow promises are rolled out like red carpet in an attempt to buy the pensioner vote, this cannot persuade me.

It was, I believe, an honest gesture when Bob Hawke declared that "No child in Australia shall live in poverty" - had he been able to remain in power to see his reforms mature, reforms that allowed this country to flourish in the prosperity that it enjoys today, and this should be reminded to others that it was only due to Labor's reform and 'not' good housekeeping as proclaimed by the Howard/Costello 'dream-team' that brought about this prosperity, I am sure Hawke's vision of a poverty free Australia would have materialized and Bob Hawke's statement and subsequent actions would have entered our history manuals as a monumental success instead of the ridicule some pundits embellish.

A pensioner today must be placed at least on an income no less than the minimum wage, it carries that minimum wage title only because by law, a person must have at least enough income to allow for basic survival, yet politicians of all persuasion turn there collective backs on the ones least able to stand up for there basic rights, - pensioners must somehow try to survive on half of what is referred to as the basic wage, the Basic Wage parallel's the Poverty Line, shown in this light, any politician that can knowingly acknowledge millions of there own countrymen are suffering extreme financial hardship, when given the monumental surplus that the treasury boasts, should hang there head in shame. Today's pensioner on \$540.00 a fortnight has to pay in excess of \$200.00 a week for over heated and inflated rental accommodation, - the same as a person earning \$800.00 a week. Today's pensioner on \$540.00 a fortnight still has to pay \$1.30 a litre for petrol, - the same as a person earning \$800.00 a week. A pensioner on \$540.00 a fortnight still has to pay \$2.40 for a bottle of milk, and \$2.75 for a loaf of bread and \$7.50Kg for mince \$4.80 for toothpaste .... the same as a person earning \$800.00 a week. We must pay the same high cost for Electricity, Gas, Water as a person earning \$800.00 A WEEK ..... the only difference is we must somehow try to achieve this same housekeeping on a 1/4 of the income. Each and every day we see prices rising and our dollar value shrinking, and this frightens us, we are in perpetual panic mode because we passed breaking point 18 months ago, so for Gods sake, for pity's sake - realize the situation and rectify it now! Please do not 'Promise' to look at it later or form a committee to investigate the plight of the pensioner, - you must be decisive and act NOW before another day passes, because we will not have to many days left unless you do act now.

Your family appears to be quite affluent in their own right, your wife, by all media reports is a successful business woman in her own right, you and your family are by any standard considered quite wealthy, and all the power to you for that, I know you both must have worked hard and struggled yourselves at some time in your own lives to achieve this status, and I admire that immensely, however your lifestyle now reflects something now considered 'unreal' from our perspective, I see a well groomed man on my TV most evenings and I know just by looking that any one of the ties that you wear on any given day actually costs more than my entire fortnightly grocery budget. That fact alone divides us into two separate worlds that really are poles apart. You can stand there and say that you understand our plight, you can say that you appreciate how hard life is as we try to exist in a world of outrageous prices, but with respect, that is patronizing us on a grand scale, you really do not have a clue Kevin, how could you, - you have to walk a mile in our shoes 'Today' and not rely on a memory of a hardened youth. One appalling actual fact that causes an aftershock that is still reverberating even now as I write this letter, is my bank SuncorpMetway punished me with an overdrawn fee of \$40.00 within my last fortnight pension cycle, I had an unexpected direct debit that was taken early, - and this placed my account in the red by 40 CENTS, and the penalty for my 40 cent overdraft was a staggering \$40.00. Then to add further pain and kicking a person when down, a further \$4.95 was requested the following day by direct debit from AOL, again 2 days early, and SuncorpMetway took a further \$40.00, my penalty for both overdrafts totaling \$5.35 was \$80.00, my pension was paid into my account one day later and my \$540.00 was lightened by \$85.35 before I could even blink. My rent had to be paid as did my Electricity through Direct Debit, by 3pm on Wednesday, just the day later after my pension payment arrived, I had just \$3.90 left in my bank account to last me the coming fortnight. I have not had milk for over a week, nor bread, I have had to live on 2minuet noodles, baked beans and basic raw spaghetti for almost two weeks, so in all honesty, who else in your walk of life that you might know would have had to survive 2 weeks on just \$3.90, not many I would suggest, and I doubt under such circumstances that you could really understand how hard life can get, It is a true saying that 'a 'backside' soon forgets how hard a wooden bench can be when sitting in the comfort of a plush leather arm chair' .... unfortunately you are now so far detached from the day to day struggle that we must face each and every day, I know this because prior to my accident, that rendered me into this godforsaken poverty trap, I also didn't give the poor or under privileged a second thought, I too had an affluent lifestyle and really wanted for nothing, - then in a blink of an eye, that was torn away from me and I am now forced to experience the other side of the coin, and I can assure you Kevin, I do not like it over here at all. So now it seems I am becoming a spokesperson to champion the plight of the poor, the unfortunate, the pensioners..... may I pass the baton to you Kevin in the hope that my story has not been aired in vein and some future hope and help will come to those that need it most.

Respectfully

Andrew J.Ball

Subj: **Pensioner Plea....Less we forget**

Date:2/07/2007

To:[kevin.rudd.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:kevin.rudd.mp@aph.gov.au)

Dear Kevin,

I can make no apology for my persistent and constant lobbying, you might call it aggravation, pestering or possibly even annoyance, however I cannot relent until I know the future for the pensioners and the less well off citizens of Australia has some degree of dignity and security in our future, I will not cease in my vigil to seek a sustained guarantee for equality from a future ALP Prime Minister to proclaim, what you have continually chorused from the onset of this campaign to be "A Fair Go" for all Australians i.e. The Voters of this great country, the pensioners and those less fortunate on Centrelink Benefits, are no less worthy citizens than the CEO of Macquarie Bank Allan Moss, Suncorp's Keith Lambert, B.H.P's Miklos Salomon, or AMP's Tom Fraser, they are Million Dollar salary recipients as we all know, however, the only real noticeable difference is the size of their take home pay packet, nevertheless, unlike those who are more affluent within our society, we are the underlying strength who will mass behind any 'understanding' politician, we are a more formidable army when one vote one count is concerned, this underclass army will be the ones to carry the next Prime Minister forward on the promised ground swell into The Lodge, but only 'IF' such a politician can promise and deliver basic needs for our own future survival. I feel as though I am the modern Genghis Khan and I lead this ragtag army of the unfortunate, the forgotten and the downtrodden... I will speak up where others fade into the shadows, I will constantly state what is wrong within the fabric of our social system until someone listens and then acts appropriately, I will not, nor cannot give up this struggle until justice is not only done, but is also seen to be done.

It saddens me greatly when I see how quickly you can and do respond to more acceptable flavors of public concern, yet ignore our own issues as I have portrayed to you in my recent letters, I now refer to the atrocities of the Aboriginal Children in Murrumbidgee, although John Howard has put this 'convenient' disaster high on his electoral agenda, we all know the Murrumbidgee saga is a cynical ploy by Howard to simply win votes from the voters, that's the raw truth of the matter, nothing more and nothing less, had it not been an election year, these poor children would remain lost and abused as they have been for the last forgotten 10 years, even though the Howard Government were made well aware of the facts long before any electioneering opportunity or action deemed this an appropriate and well timed diversion, not dissimilar to the Tampa incident that saw 353 asylum seekers, (including 150 women and children) drown, this was sadly a god given opportunistic gift to Howard then as this is now, however like the Tampa and Tampa incident, these horrific issues will soon be conveniently put aside once the votes have all been counted. I simply do not want to see any future Government placed in the same category as the Howard/Brough debacle that is sure to enter our history books, and yes, beyond our own issues as put forward here, I like many others would like to see real change and improvement to the aboriginal community, but these must be 'real' sustained and meaningful changes, so 'IF' you and the ALP caucus are 'fair dinkum' on genuine aboriginal reform, then by all means grab the mantle and run with it, but please do not become like the Liberal Party and tar your own political party with shallow

"Flavor of the Month" issues.

I must now apologetically appear somewhat shallow myself in light of such blatant and disgraceful circumstances in order to bring my own position or prospectus back into the foreground, such issues are created to take our eye off the ball, and while we concentrate on the subject matter put out in front by the Government, we are supposed to forget about rising fuel costs, rising rents, rising basic food costs rising everything except our income, I do not take my eye off the ball, how can I, the reality haunts me every day I draw breath. So once again I bring our situation back out into the spotlight, I once again raise the issue of the Plight of the Pensioners and my reason for writing to you again and again. We are as stated earlier a formidable army numbering millions, and any sensible politician would grasp at the chance to capture at least 89% of these votes in one tactical swift movement. As I have already stated, I really am saddened that you have not responded in any way to my requests for a "Better Deal" i.e. a composite of the Basic Wage for all Australian Pensioners, be they aged and disabled pensioners or welfare recipients, I also personally hate repetition but in this instance I have no other option left open to me other than to play that song again.....

I did say earlier Kevin that we were 'the army' that would carry the next Prime Minister into "The Lodge" all I ask is that you honor and respect us as worthwhile citizens in desperate need of social reform and justice and your announced "Fair Go" should also consider us along with the other 'accepted' Australian Citizens, and not simply cast aside and forgotten as seemed to be the mantra of the repressive past 10 years under the Liberal jackboot, they will rue the day they ignored this silent minority.

Yours truly

Andrew J.Ball