

## Background

Since the age of eleven I have experienced gross physical disability due to childhood onset of juvenile rheumatoid arthritis and bronchiectasis. I gained a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Melbourne, all done by correspondence. For nearly 30 years I have been in full time open employment.

I receive 34 hours a week of attendant care support and live on my own in my own unit. I require attendant care support every morning and every night. I utilize aids for daily living.

I found full time employment at the age of 36 years, following intensive rehabilitation.

My income disqualifies me from receiving the Disability Support Pension. I am totally satisfied with that. But I remain totally dissatisfied that people with vision-impairment are exempt from the means test applied to the DSP and so receive it irrespective of income. This does not apply to any other disability sub-group.

There are many people with acquired brain injury and other types of disability with great support needs who are not similarly exempted. This is unacceptable discrimination.

1. Any new system must correct the inequity of only vision-impaired persons qualifying for a means-test free disability support pension.
2. An option for consideration may be to pay the DSP to all people with disabilities and treat that as part of total income. Income tax should then be paid on taxable income, including the pension payment.

While some current thinking favours direct payments to individuals with disability to allow them to purchase support services, this must be balanced with supporting strong service providers so that there are good service provider options to choose from. While I am capable of organizing a team of carers, for ten years I have preferred to have my service provider organise those details, while I can devote my resources to full time employment and leading a full and integrated life.

3. A new system must support strong service providers while enabling choice for consumers of service provider.

Over the last ten years, my carers have typically been students needing part-time work and people nearing retirement age also wanting part-time work. There are very few career carers in the industry.

4. A new system must support more career carers in the caring industry.

I recently became 65 years young, and intend to continue working full time for at least another couple of years. My support has been provided by the disability sector; I want to continue to receive that support from that sector; it would be totally inappropriate for me to be now transferred to the age care sector.

5. A new system must support people with disabilities life-long.

I believe people with disabilities should be encouraged to work and be productive as long as they can and to pay taxes just like workers without disabilities. I am very pleased to contribute to the community in the routine way of workers.

Thank you for allowing me to comment.

Name Withheld