

Dear Senators,

Disability and Carers Alliance makes this a submission to the Committees on Community Affairs Senate Committee opposing the proposed change to Disability Support Pension Portability Rules

(Social Services & Other Legislation Amendment 2014 Budget

Measures No 2) Bill 2014, to be introduced (if passed through

Senate) by the Liberal Government effective on 1/1/15.

My name is Esther Czedik, and I am one of the leaders of the Disability and Carers Alliance: a group which is currently holding over 3000 members. Please allow me to give you first some details of my background and current situation.

I haven't always been a carer and I never thought I would become one. I used to work for a travel agency in Sydney and my partner who I am currently caring for used to work for Dulux for over twenty years. We both loved our job, and everything seemed to be perfect until the day my partner got diagnosed with a progressive disease affecting the peripheral nervous system. Unfortunately in 2008 he had to stop working, so had I, and I became his full time carer.

We both have families, sisters, elderly parents overseas. My parents are both over 80 years old and suffering from serious, life threatening illnesses.

The proposed legislation which will limit the portability to 4 weeks in a 12 month period will force us to break the bond between our families, and leave our elderly parents without any family support.

(Please note that Centerlink doesn't grant exceptions even for acute family crisis)

Australia is a multicultural country. The Abbott government knows many of us have strong family ties overseas. It's not a crime, but the Abbott government makes claims that taxpayers, voters would have an impression that by spending time with families overseas somehow is, and people on the disability support pension therefore should not deserve more than 28 days a year. While it is perfectly acceptable for someone to fly from Sydney to Perth to visit their loved ones, suddenly for those ones wanting to visit their loved ones overseas is not. It's simply unfair and very cruel.

But let's leave the cruelty and unfairness of this shocking proposal for now.

The Abbott government claims that lowering the portability to 28 days / 12 month would somehow save money for taxpayers. As a matter of fact a person with disability cost taxpayers a lot more in Australia than if that person was overseas. In fact if DSP was in line with OAP , there would be huge savings on concessions funded by the government (energy, municipal rates, health care, etc) The Abbott government knows this very well, but still make it look like if it was the

other way around.

Tony Abbott's budget has been built on lies, and claiming saving money by lowering the portability is also proven to be just another lie, another political game to increase this government's popularity and gain votes.

I am not roting the system, neither my partner, nor the thousands of members in my group. We are not rorters as the government tries to demonise us. We are not trying to use "government handouts" to spend luxurious holidays in Asia. In fact most of us were saving for years to afford one single trip. Some would even sacrifice on food and accommodation to be able to afford that. Another fact this legislation doesn't take into account that most people are not travelling at all every year, and finally when they do, after a decade maybe, they are limited to just 28 days.

I don't think what we ask is unreasonable, especially when the previous government allowed people to stay and establish families overseas. All they ask now is to be able to maintain the family bond. This legislation will not allow it, in fact it will destroy families, the family values what Australia should stands for.

Please note that carers would also be affected, even though the legislation for carers is still currently multiple 6 weeks, however it will be useless if the person we are caring for is only allowed 28 days / 12 months.

Carers are doing a very tough job and saving millions of dollars for taxpayers. They don't deserve to be treated that way.

Dear Senators, if you are not willing to block completely this legislation, our suggestion is to modify it at least by taking into consideration overseas family ties, allowing extended period of time for family visits especially for acute family crisis, and looking at travel in 3 year instead of 12 month period, (allowing 3 months / 3 years, for ex.)

Dear Senators, I hope I gave you a better insight and understanding about our concerns. As you are about to make a decision about our future, impacting on our relationship with our families and loved ones, I sincerely hope that you understand the weight of your decision and will make it right by blocking this cruel and draconian legislation proposal.

Yours Sincerely,

Esther Czedik
DCA