

Dear Committee Members,

I respectfully submit the following information in relation to your committee.

I was on a disability pension for a number of years, and got well enough to try a return to full time work for nearly two years. My pension was put on hold, after a trial period at my new job. Due to increasing ill health, and workplace bullying, I used up all my sick leave and resigned my position. I wanted to restart my disability pension, but was told that I had to reapply, which I have done, but, because of the changes, my application was denied, hence put onto Newstart. My application is currently under review pending me providing further medical evidence with the 13 week period for decision appeals. I am not going to be able to meet this deadline, as I am still waiting for appointments with public health specialists.

I think the concept of supporting people finding work is good, as we all need money and support to obtain work. However in my case, I have been deemed to have a disability and am required to find work of 15 hours per week due to my disabilities. So I am stuck on Newstart, which is not enough to survive on but no DSP (Disability Support Pension). I have been searching for telecommuting or work from home positions since February this year, with no success. Employment opportunities where I live are limited to fit and capable persons for manual labour.

I have to visit medical support, Centrelink and the disability employment service at least monthly, which involves a 200km round trip. At least the GP bulk bills me or I would be unable to afford to go to the doctor. I also have to take medicine to assist with my condition that costs around \$80 per month. I do not meet the criteria to obtain it under PBS scheme as the usage is off label (Gabepentin for the treatment of diabetic neuropathic pain). There is no public transport in my area at all.

I own my own property, and it suits my medical conditions. I have contemplated moving in closer to town, but have been unable to find suitable accommodation and save enough for the required bond and moving expenses.

In my opinion, the Newstart allowance needs to be increased to allow people to live with dignity and have the money for suitable clothes, grooming and training and to be afford to travel to obtain work.

I also think that there needs to be a rethink of people in my category – people with disabilities/illness that prevents them working full time to be given part DSP or a different type of payment.

Please contact me if you require further information.