People With Disabilities (WA) Inc.
individual & systemic advocacy

Submission

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, inquiry into Social

Services Legislation Amendment (ending carbon tax compensation) Bill 2017

Submission from People with Disabilities WA.

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People With Disabilities WA (PWdWA)

Since 1981 PWdWA has been the peak disability consumer organisation representing the rights, needs, and equity of all Western Australians with a physical, intellectual, neurological, psychosocial, or sensory disability via individual and systemic advocacy. We provide access to information, and independent individual and systemic advocacy with a focus on those who are most vulnerable.

PWdWA is run by and for people with disabilities and aims to empower the voices of all people with disabilities in Western Australia.

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the senate inquiry into the Social Services Legislation Amendment (ending carbon tax compensation) Bill 2017. This Bill is being put in place to prevent new recipients of income support or concession cards from being paid the energy supplement. This includes people who will be on the Disability Support Pension or have a disability and are receiving New Start or a health concession card due to being on low income. For many people with disabilities there is reliance on a range of medical equipment and assistive technology which uses electricity, as well as requirements around heating and cooling that means people must have reverse cycle air-conditioning. People with disabilities WA is opposed to this change.

Issues

There are two main issues which need to be considered before enacting this Bill. The first being that people who have a disability are more likely to have increased energy costs due to the equipment they need and/or the environment they need to live in. The second being the continuing increases for electricity and gas that are affecting all people whether they are on a pension or not.

Many people with disability are reliant for their health and ability to be independent on items that use electricity. For example people with communication aids that require charging, reliable fridges for medication, reverse cycle air-conditioning for temperature regulation, electric beds and hoists, and ventilation and breathing machines.

On June 17 their was an article on news.com.au that highlighted the price rises for electricity that would be expected from July 1, 2017. This article states "POWER prices are set to rocket after three major retailers announced increases of up to 20 per cent and $600 a year for the average customer in some states." This article doesn't include Western Australia due to different regulatory systems however an

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article in Perth Now on June 22 said that WA electricity prices would be rising by 10.9%.

The extremely minimal increases to the amounts in both the Disability Support Pension and New Start do not cover the increases which people are experiencing in their electricity and energy costs.

Conclusion

People with Disabilities WA supports the submissions of People with Disability Australia and ACOSS. This Bill should not go ahead and the energy supplement should continue to be paid to all those people receiving benefits for income support. The increasing cost of electricity is outpacing any increase in the levels of income support that people receive or the levels of concession that they receive. People with a disability and those with chronic health conditions who are most reliant on equipment that requires electricity will be most adversely affected without support to cover these costs.