

I'd like the Committee to consider the following while they are examining the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 1) Bill 2014 and Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 2) Bill 2014 in general and in particular the proposed reduction of the Disability Support Pension portability from six weeks to a minimum of four weeks a year.

I am gay and HIV+. I have numerous issues from being long term HIV+ and I travel at least once a year. I don't have any family in Australia who wish to have contact with me. I also have very few friends in Australia. I do however have many friends in Europe and the UK.

I use the portability to see my friends, who are more like my family. Traveling to see them is the only way in which I can maintain my dignity and to stop falling into an incredibly deep depression as I feel so very isolated in Australia.

I used to work full time, until my condition worsened. I cannot work full time anymore. My ability to work at all is limited by my lack of fine motor skills, an inability to function in stressful environments (my ability to verbally communicate reduces the more I get stressed), I also can't wear shoes for extended periods of time.

I could possibly work one or two days a week, however, I would be unable to afford medications, bills, food or general living expenses on such a restricted wage.

I understand that the government wants more people to participate, but changes to the Disability Support Pension are becoming punitive. They are punishing people because they are disabled. I did not ask to become HIV+. In fact, my prognosis stems from sexual assault inside a NSW prison, while I was there under remand, in protective custody, for a minor white collar crime, which also precludes me from certain professions automatically.

Since applying for and receiving DSP in August 2007, I have undergone at least three reviews of different styles. I have had to get reports from neurologists, GPs and specialist Clinical Senior Lecturer/Clinical Lead in sexual health to give to Centrelink to prove again that my disability has not improved.

I can understand that some might look at a person on DSP and wonder why they are on it, or why they should be able to leave the country for longer than a person working full time. However, being on DSP, I also ask, why should a person on Age Pension be allowed to leave the country permanently, while I suffer a more and more restrictive punitive system with every new government brought in.

I'm also no fool. I understand what these changes really mean. They're meant to terrify people. They are meant to be cruel and callous. The government simply wants an excuse to cancel DSP payments and refuse to allow people back on.

It's time that the senate refused to make any further changes to the Disability Support Pension. I beg and plead with the Senate inquiry to ensure that the rights of those who are disabled are not further eroded.

I also refer the senate inquiry to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 5 - No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 12 - No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13 - Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state and everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 22 - Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organisation and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

I'd also like to point out, that with the removal of the Pension Education Supplement, the government is in effect consigning disabled people to an even narrower option of improving themselves.

It's time that our rights are listened to and enshrined in law in this country. The disabled should not be a political football to kick around. I am not asking for a lot of money, in fact, my yearly pension, is only a few thousand dollars more than what the Prime Minister gets paid in a fortnight.

Just please, don't stop us from being able to see our friends or our families. For many of us, travel outside Australia is the difference between being able to afford to eat or have a roof over our heads. This country is too expensive for us to live. For some, it is cheaper and even free to get our medical treatment in other countries.