

## Fewkes, Nathan (REPS)

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**From:** julie conquest [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 3 November 2016 1:57 PM  
**To:** Committee, JCPAA (REPS)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Joint Committee of Public Accounts & Audit . Inquiry into Disability Pension process.

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Submission for the committee : Inquiry into disability pension process.

On the Human Services website in relation to the disability pension reviews, it says the department will use ' a risk profiling based approach to select people for review' .( link below) It says that only people who are at high risk of not meeting the criteria will be reviewed. This is clearly NOT being adhered to as evidenced by Age letter 17/10 'The long , hard battle for my son's rights' , The Age article on 23/10, pg 4 , 'Why was our son's disability ever questioned ?' and so many other cases.

If Centrelink does not look at the files to assess risk before sending letters they will be subjecting long term chronically ill people like those mentioned above to the tortuous review process. This is inhumane & inefficient .

This process must be corrected and brought back into line with the wording on the Human Services website . It is senseless, inefficient & cruel to send letters at random.

Many were successfully medically reassessed in 2012 when Julia Gillard tightened the requirements. It is not right that these people be yet AGAIN subjected to reassessment as

they could not be in the high risk category as described on the Human Services website ,if they have already successfully completed this more stringent medical reassessment.

The government has also said they will only be using government selected doctors for the medical reviews . This is fraught with myriad ethical difficulties. ...ie...could quotas have to be met by the government selected doctors?etc... How could these doctors compare to the specialists and GPs who have been treating these people in many cases for decades.? Is this inferring there is something wrong in the behaviour of these specialists & GPs who have been treating the recipient ? This is a minefield of ethical problems.

It seems outrageous that this severe process can continue unchallenged . It is causing massive stress to the chronically unwell and their families. It is not only causing stress & confusion to legitimate recipients who have received letters for review but there is now also much anticipatory stress & confusion in the general community.

It has been mentioned that they are also targeting anyone on disability who has been overseas .

Surely the chronically ill are entitled to a holiday the same as the rest of society. Surely they are allowed some quality of life .The government now has a rule that they cannot go overseas for more than 4 weeks. Surely these people cannot be condemned to a life sitting inside their unit [24/7](#) for fear of losing their pension. The government seem oblivious to the many categories of people with disabilities. They seem devoid of any real understanding of the nature of chronic illnesses.

Some people who are not well enough to commit to 8 hrs of work a week may be well enough to do some travel . If they can only travel overseas for 4 weeks it would be very difficult as the reality is that such people would need adequate time to rest after jet lag . By the time they had then prepared to do some small activity they would be due back at the airport for the return flight. Some real understanding of the reality of the day to day is needed about people with serious chronic illness and how much longer it takes to do ordinary tasks ..tasks which of course seem so simple for those who are 100%.

In four weeks a chronically unwell person may only be able able to do a few small activities .

They need to be able to pace themselves.

Four weeks does not allow such people enough time to make a trip worthwhile . Some will be travelling for treatment options also , a whole other area that needs to be looked at properly.

Surely it is discriminatory to make it practically impossible for chronically unwell people to have a holiday .

Recipients need to know if they are allowed to travel overseas for longer than 4 weeks if they suspend their pension , but need to know if they did this , would they have to go through the entire reapplication process on return . If that was the case it would not be an option .People cannot get through to Centrelink to find out the answer to this question.

It would help a great deal if the government obtained the necessary information about the many types of disabilities and chronic illnesses so they could organise a more sensible ,humane & appropriate process .

Surely no one wants a person with late stage Parkinson's (for example ) to be put through a review . If the criteria of , 'people who haven't been reviewed in the last 2 years' is applied ,this could include such people and many other seriously chronically unwell people .

The criteria needs to be more specific so such people would not be included.

The only way to completely avoid such a circumstance is if the risk profiling is done BEFORE letters of review are sent, otherwise the process will be inefficient & inhumane.

I have included 2 links to the Human Services website at the bottom.

One says a risk profiling method will be used to select people for review and that only people at high risk of not meeting the criteria will be selected . This would have to mean that files would be checked by Centrelink BEFORE review letters were sent .This has NOT been adhered to given that legitimate people who are NOT at high risk of not meeting the criteria HAVE been sent review letters.

The other link says, people who haven't been reviewed in the last 2 years will be reviewed .

This would be too broad a sweep for a sensible criteria as it would include many long term seriously unwell people who are NOT at high risk of not meeting the criteria.

It would also include people at low risk of not meeting the criteria who also were successfully medically reassessed in 2012 on the more stringent criteria brought in by Julia Gillard. It would be unreasonable & inefficient to review such low risk people yet again.

These two links ( included at bottom of email ) are giving quite different criteria which is adding to the stress and confusion. This needs to be corrected & replaced with a sensible criteria which will not lead to legitimate recipients being subjected unfairly to a review process.

The criteria needs also to be one which results in an efficient process, time & money wise.

There will be an enormous waste of time & money if the process is not executed through a sensible criteria.

I have written many times to Christian Porter ,Alan Tudge , & Malcolm Turnbull .

I have written to every other MP ,senator & advocacy body I can think of to try to explain why the current process of review is not sensible, humane or efficient. I have tried to explain why sending review letters at random, without Centrelink checking files first , is causing unnecessary stress to people who are already suffering with serious chronic illness.

Here are the two links on the Human Services website to information on how the reviews will be done ...2 different methods ..greatly adding to the confusion.

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/corporate/budget/budget-2016-17/disability-and-carers/national-disability-insurance-scheme-savings-fund-medical-risk-based-review-current-dsp>

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/medical-risk-based-reviews-disability-support-pension-customers>

Yours Sincerely

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