

We The People  
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We the People 234 The Age Pension Fiasco



Good day to you. Late last year I reported that from the 1st January 2017 over 300,000 pensioners would see a reduction or loss of the age pension. I made an appointment with Karen Andrews MP, federal member for McPherson to discuss the matter. That meeting took place and no assistance or hope was forthcoming via Karen Andrews, from the federal government. We are told the basis for the severe cuts to many pensions is to make the system sustainable and so we all have to give a bit to help. While Karen Andrews is a pleasant and accessible person it appears to me that she has no sway or real power whatsoever over the merchant banker Prime Minister Turnbull. This in itself is a worry because she should represent 'we the people' fearlessly and yet she advised me that we should have known about their policies. My response was that none of us vote for parties, rather we vote for individuals, a point she referred to as "technically correct". Yes it is Ms Andrews and a point she should easily grasp. Your job is to represent the people of McPherson without fear or favour even if it puts your political head on the political chopping block.

My deep concern with the daylight robbery that the pension cuts represent, is that it's devastating to many of us on full or part pensions when we lose a relatively big chunk of pension money each week. In my case, purely as an example, it's a loss of \$70 a week and I know of people who lose a lot more in pension and rent assistance. The problem is that we live right on the breakeven point with living expenses and any drop creates significant stress. However let's look at this with some perspective. First up Labor and Bill Shorten declared they would not support the changes but Shorten also said if they form government he **would not reverse** the decision. An opportunistic coward, nothing less. Ms Andrews told me with pride that the coalition had reduced foreign aid from Labor's nine billion a year to just over 4 billion. That's a good move but remember the country borrows that money to give away to countries which mostly don't like us. Ms Andrews response was that, "*there are very needy people out there*" and she's right.....like the 2.9 million Australians living below the poverty line right here in Aus. So if they were to take a small amount from foreign aid no pensioner would be worse off in Australia. Seems pretty obvious to me. For the record, Karen Andrews MP is second highest on the list of politicians with property portfolios, so how on earth would she appreciate what the pension cuts really mean.

What I object to with this light-weight government is that while they have chucked out their moral compass regarding pensions, they have also thrown away their financial navigation as well. Let me explain, again by using my own case as an example, where they have taken around \$3,500 a year from me. I have had to re-adjust my budget to live within my very modest means by firstly cancelling my private health insurance which costs \$2,500 a year. So I am going onto the public health system and the government will now pay for my health issues. In addition I must turn away the good folk who knock on my door and ask for a donation for the Cancer Council, the Red Cross, the RSPCA, the Sallies and the like. Further, I have rescued unwanted dogs for many years and now that must stop because I can't afford the vet bills. When I started work nobody had heard of superannuation in private enterprise. There was a government commitment and indeed a national account with massive sums of money raised from people's tax/levy contributions to ensure we were ok if we fell a little short in retirement way down the track. We worked hard, very hard and raised our kids and then finally retired amid all the trials life throws at us. The merchant banker show pony decided to change the rules retrospectively, with no real thought to anything or anyone. All this while his lot go on taxpayer funded trips and sojourns that are not for government business and are simply contrived for personal gain. What absolute hypocrisy.

This federal coalition government, for all its so called skills, can't see the inevitable ripple effect throughout the country. Maybe if all we seniors withdrew all of our free family and community services it might make this ridiculous government wake up. This is all going to come home to roost with the Coalition and big time. Now Ms Andrews, please explain to Malcolm that the over 65's should be spared this latest round of stupid illogical pension cuts. If you want to tighten up the pension then do so incrementally over time **or lose office**.

**Until next time this is Kent Bayley**