

Review of the Taxation System

I recognize there is a delicate balance between the amount of taxes paid and the amount of services that can be expected by the community. eg. Scandinavian countries pay a large proportion of their income in tax, but they also receive many free services. So how does the Government get the right balance?

No doubt this is the overall purpose of this enquiry.

As a health professional having worked for both the NSW and ACT Governments, I see many difficulties and inequities around the issues of provision of equipment for those in our community who have a disability or are experiencing difficulties as a result of ageing. The number of ageing in the community is predicted to rise so we can anticipate the demand for assistance will only become greater. The number of children and young people living with significant disabilities in our community is also predicted to increase. So how can the Government be responsive to these issues.

Members of our Veteran Community are able to access certain additional services via DVA. The vast majority however are either dependent on their parents, friends and Disability Support or Aged Pensions.

The issues of equipment provision for this vast majority is problematic at best and each State and Territory has a different model for eligibility and service delivery. For an average family of two parents and two children the going is tough for most at the moment, particularly in these times of economic uncertainty, increasing unemployment etc. Consider the plight of this same family if one of the children has a significant disability requiring frequent medical and allied health appointments, special schooling, a raft of special equipment for their management in the home environment. In addition, it is highly likely that this family will have to undertake significant modifications to the accommodation in which they are living. And this is only the beginning. As their child with a disability grows and inevitably becomes more difficult to manage, more equipment and adjustments will need to be introduced to the home setting. And then there is the issue of transport. Small children can easily be lifted from stroller to car seat, but by the age of about three years most parents begin to struggle with this maneuver and rely on the child assisting with this process by climbing into position in the car. For the parent of a child with a disability this lifting continues year after year and at what peril. This lifting occurs not only in and out of a vehicle, but across the board... on and of the change table, in and out of the bath, in and out of the wheelchair... and these tasks are performed many times a day.

To have a child with a significant disability is a life sentence for all members of the family, not only the parents but siblings and extended family members. It is not a coincidence that many marriages cannot endure the rigors and demands placed upon them. It is not the script they had imagined for their lives.

How can an improved taxation system help?

On a personal note, my husband and I became the full time carers for my elderly Father. He required 24 hour supervision. As he couldn't be left alone we ran our lives on a roster

system, even to the point of sleeping. One of us had a turn to sleep at night while the other was on duty. My husband had the best score one night having to get up to attend to his needs 13 times. This way of managing was not sustainable. We however were very lucky. We had a house that was suitable in a physical sense. As he was a veteran he was entitled to some additional support with regard to equipment and respite, and still we struggled. Consider this scenario acted out many times over across Australia and we ask the question.. what is the best way for the Government to assist these families.

What are the answers.. an increase in our taxes to allow for increased financial support related to level of need, improved availability of equipment and services for families in need of assistance. Better recognition of the role of unpaid carers.

When family members take on a caring role they are frequently unable to sustain full time employment so there is an additional financial burden. There is some provision to compensate carers, but it does not address the issue of lost earning and ongoing employment potential and opportunity.

I commend the Government on taking on this much overdue task and look forward to reading your recommendations.

Anonymous