



SENIORS GRANTS 20 July 2004

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): One of the great pleasures of being a member of parliament is being able to help make a difference in people's lives, particularly when many of those people have given so much to others by volunteering in all kinds of capacities within the small communities in which they have lived.

It was a thrill to open officially the self-opening doors which enabled people using gophers, wheelchairs, walking frames or just walking sticks to negotiate a door without having to ask someone else to help them, or to attend a concert and officially launch the new disabled toilets with a royal flush, as I did last year.

Ms Breuer interjecting:

Mrs PENFOLD: Yes. However, today I want to lament the passing of these seniors grants that enabled these small capital works items to be purchased. Our so-called caring Labor government has now changed the criteria. The total of the electorate of Flinders in two years under a Liberal government amounted to more than \$50 000 to 20 organisations, the largest single grant being less than \$8 000. The grants were in two categories: equipment and assistance, for which the maximum available grant was \$2 000; and, development grants up to a maximum of \$20 000.

In 2000-01 the reasons given for the grants by the Liberal minister were: to focus on the contribution of older people through their local communities and to encourage organisations and community groups to develop innovative projects to create new opportunities for actively promoting the participation of older people in their communities; and, to assist voluntary agencies, community organisations and self-help groups to remain active in the community.

Then Labor took over. The total seniors grants for funding in the electorate of Flinders in two years under Labor amounts to less than \$20 000 to four organisations, with \$17 000 of that in one grant. This means that about 17 small seniors grants applications (worth about \$30 000 in my electorate alone) have missed out over the last two years.

Grants that improve social living and club activities include office equipment, amplifying and sound equipment, handrails to make premises safer, projector and screens for programs, microwaves for better eating and a digital camera to catch up with technology while recording events. An active lifestyle was encouraged through walking trails, bowls mats, camping trips for cultural preservation and learn to swim classes.

The quality of life was lifted through outings for educational and social purposes, care support and training for volunteers, experiencing traditional Aboriginal life, computing instruction (how to use computers and the internet) and guidance and education on projects for healthy living.

In March 2003, the Labor member for Ashford made a statement in parliament in which she was described as the minister for social justice. It is interesting to note that this particular ministry has been dropped from Labor's portfolios. The honourable member stated:

I have reviewed the grants for seniors operations and examined the criteria to allocate funding. I want to be sure that the funds that are directed towards these areas and purposes support the Labor government's social justice agenda. Some changes to the administration and policy orientation of the program are therefore being made.

The member for Ashford indicated that major grants will be funded for up to three years and address such areas

as employment, promoting positive images of older people in the media and developing age-friendly housing and transport options—quite a significant agenda, one must admit, for a budget of \$200 000 to \$400 000 maximum. Gone are the small grants that benefited regional ageing, which gave people a little of the quality of life that is so often available in the city but not in the country—and in its place is a program that is quite different. Just how different was made clear with the 2004 allocation of grants, when a grant of \$20 000 was made for the writing of a union history and a grant of \$20 000 was made to a gay and lesbian group for theatrical comedy work. It is worth noting that \$20 000 is the maximum grant available in this program for what are considered to be minor projects.

During estimates a simple question was put to the Minister for Families and Communities in which he was asked for the eligibility criteria for grants for seniors funding that allowed these applications to succeed and how these projects would assist the wellbeing of aged people in South Australia. One of the most deceptive sentences in the minister's evasive answer to the question was his comment on the committee that decides these grants, when he stated 'It is at arm's length from the government.'

However, in reference to the minor seniors grants, the former minister for social justice said that grant applications for this component would continue to be assessed by a ministerial advisory council that reflects community diversity. A ministerial advisory council advises the minister, but it is the minister who agrees to the recommendations made by the advisory council.

Time Expired

(read below for the rest of Liz's speech which she did not have time to complete)

Our population is ageing. We are constantly reminded of the increasing proportion of people who come into the senior's bracket. Australia currently has something like 38,000 people over 100 years of age and that number is projected to grow to around 380,000 in a few years time.

However, the suspicion arises that my aged constituents do not fit the bill for the Labor State Government. And at the risk of being labeled as homophobic and of red baiting and as showing appalling prejudice, as my colleague who asked the question was, I ask the Minister and Labor Government to reinstate the grants so that they once again provide some social justice, and that a little bit of funding that so many small remote organisations need to provide a small amount of pleasure to a great number of people instead of \$40,000 grants going to two organisations that are city based that will give little comfort to very few people or perhaps a lot of comfort for a very few Labor politicians.