

MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY

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Shadow Minister for Public Accountability
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Out-of-touch Hockey 'not briefed' on shameful Leukaemia to Work case

Human Services Minister, Joe Hockey, this morning showed that he is more focussed on his plastic Smartcard than the real life cases of his Centrelink customers, by admitting that he *'hasn't yet been briefed'* on the shameful treatment of leukaemia sufferer, Matthew Pearce.

Out-of-touch Hockey refused an interview on ABC Radio because of a lack of a briefing and instead sent in the general manager of Centrelink to defend the indefensible.

Minister Hockey claims he hasn't been briefed despite:

- Having a letter about the case forwarded to him by Minister Stone on Monday;
- The case being on the front page of Matthew's local paper in Perth yesterday;
- A media release sent out by the Opposition yesterday; and
- The case being on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* today.

For the Minister's information, Mr Pearce is a 16-year-old leukaemia sufferer from Perth who was forced to attend a job capacity assessment the day after he was released from hospital. At this assessment he was told that he was not eligible for the Disability Support Pension because leukaemia was not a permanent disability.

If it is really the case that Minister Hockey hadn't been briefed on this tragic case then the only conclusion is that he didn't care enough to seek a briefing. He had plenty of time and plenty of staff.

At the moment, all Minister Hockey cares about is his troubled Smartcard project and nothing else. He has forgotten about his 6.4 million Centrelink customers and especially those who are being seriously affected by his Government's heartless welfare to work policies.

To see the extent of Minister Hockey's neglect, you need look no further than the speeches posted on his department's website, where every speech made this year is about the Smartcard. There is not one speech about the Welfare to Work policies that his department has to administer.

The shameful treatment of Mr Pearce is a giveaway into what Welfare to Work is really about – punish the victims.

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