



Hand Up

Campaign to REINSTATE FULL ACCESS to TIA (Training Incentive Allowance) NZ

Monday, 31 May 2010

The Honourable Paula Bennett
Minister for Social Development and Employment
New Zealand

Tēnā koe Ms Bennett,

In recent times you have increasingly been making public spectacles of carefully selected beneficiaries and their families, releasing carefully selected part-information to illustrate your examples. The motivation for your actions has been, presumably, to make 'examples' of these people to show how, in your view, the welfare system is being abused by unworthy and undeserving families and, by extension and inference, how most people on a benefit are ripping off the system.

This sort of appalling behaviour is absolutely reprehensible for a Minister of the Crown.

In our opinion, you are increasingly throwing aside the basic tenants of your office to degrade, demean, denigrate, humiliate, vilify and malign beneficiaries further marginalising them within New Zealand society.

In your Cabinet Manual, which outlines what is expected of Ministers of the Crown (amongst others), and how you are to conduct yourself in your office it says under point 2.52 that *at all times, Ministers are expected to act lawfully and to behave in a way that upholds, and is seen to uphold, the highest ethical standards*. It is clear that your conduct does not reflect these standards in any way.

Your actions are putting people in danger by opening up beneficiaries to public attack. You are not only allowing those very people you are supposed to be helping to be judged and sentenced by the court of public opinion but you are actively encouraging this by your public statements and inflaming public vilification.

Your actions clearly show your lack of integrity and respect for the most vulnerable members of our society and for your office as a Minister of the Crown.

Here are some quotes posted on a public message board over the past weekend:

"... It is completely and absolutely unethical for a government minister to target an individual or family and hold them up for public ridicule and cause them to be the subject of vile and ignorant abuse. If the family is doing something illegal it is up to Bennett to put a stop to it, if not then it is disgusting for her to publicly target them in this way."



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“So she's at it again. And without having all the details, people will feel free to be outraged at this ... The more Paula Bennett targets people, the more of a power abusing bully she shows herself to be.”

“Yes I agree with you that her comments seem to be mostly about communicating a message to the public [but] It is still unethical regardless of her motivations. As for being accountable, many many non beneficiaries recieve government help now through wff, so do many businesses, researchers, people who are involved in the arts...also pensioners. The thing is - do you see anyone from these groups being held up and ridiculed, accused of bludging and having innuendos thrown around about their sex life by a government minister?”

We hope that you take some time to step back and reassess your tactics and prove to New Zealand that you are worthy of your position where you can make sound, rational and just decisions as they relate to your portfolios of Minister of Social Development and Employment.

Nāku noa, nā