

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **Centrelink Gives Newlywed Wife No Option But to Divorce Disabled Husband**

Megan Dodd was told by Centrelink she would have to divorce her Husband Paul Dodd, who sustained a severe brain injury on their honeymoon, in order to receive financial assistance for his ongoing medical care.

Ms Dodd has been deemed "Medically Separated" from her new husband, though was told that Mr Dodd was still not eligible for the full Disability Support Pension as he is a married man.

"When I was on the phone to Centrelink they told me that in order for Paul to get his full Disability Support Pension I would need to divorce him. I started crying and felt overwhelmed with grief."

"Centrelink sees my marriage certificate as just a bit of paper, though it is all I have left. I haven't had the opportunity to experience a normal marriage, all I have is the bond we shared and the memories of our wedding day. It means nothing to them, but it means the world to me." Ms Dodd said.

The tragic incident happened on Christmas Day 2007, when Mr and Ms Dodd were on their honeymoon in Europe, just twenty four days after they were married.

Mr Dodd slipped down 5 stairs hitting his head as he fell, when a time-delayed light went out early. Sustaining a severe traumatic brain injury, Mr Dodd was not expected to survive the night.

Now fifteen months on from the accident Paul is in a stable condition but his injuries are so severe that it has left his ability to take care of himself and communicate at almost 0%, requiring him to have twenty-four hour care.

Ms Dodd was forced to return to full time work only two months after they returned home, in order to cover living expenses and Mr Dodd's ongoing medical bills.

"I have been given no real option by Centrelink, but to divorce Paul. We desperately need financial assistance, I struggle to meet everyday living expenses and then there are Paul's ongoing medical bills. I am being faced with losing our home." Ms Dodd said.

Not wanting others to experience this, Ms Dodd founded the Dodd Foundation, a charity to assist individuals and families affected by brain injury, making it her mission to gain more rights for spouses with disabled loved ones.

"Please understand, I have no ill intent towards Centrelink. I just believe that there is a loop hole in the system that is causing people to fall through the cracks and as citizens we have a responsibility to fight for the rights of those who can't speak for themselves."

"The Government needs to allow all medically separated couples to be eligible for the full Disability Support Pension, regardless of the working spouse's income." Ms Dodd said.

While 1 in 50 Australians suffer from Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), the resources and support available are extremely limited. As a result those who sustain an ABI not only suffer from an invisible disability, but all too often become invisible in the system too.

Following the due process Ms Dodd has contacted the Commonwealth Ombudsman and Wayne Swan her local MP, though believes the public needs to know exactly what is happening to families in this situation.

**ENDS**

### **Media Contact**

To organise an interview with Megan or for more information please contact:

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