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The Hon Alan Tudge MP
Minister for Human Services
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Telephone numbers for the Department of Human Services

We were delighted to hear that the Department of Human Services has been upgrading its telephone systems. However, it seems that some other improvements are needed. Many of our members have told us that they cannot find the Centrelink phone numbers in the phone book.

For example, recently one of our members told us that he did not have access to a computer and had to use the telephone book to find a phone number, because there are no telephone numbers on the Age Pension Card or the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, just the names of the Department of Human Services and Centrelink. He suggested that it would be very helpful if appropriate phone numbers were provided on those cards. He pointed out that there is a phone number on the Medicare card and banks provide useful numbers on their cards. He went on to say that it was difficult to find Centrelink numbers in the phone book.

So I decided to have a look in the ACT phone book - and this is what I found.

There is no separate entry for Centrelink anywhere in the phone book. One has to go to the Department of Human Services page in the phone book (page 115), where one can choose the appropriate phone number from among the 23 different numbers provided. In the Yellow pages, under the heading "Your Government" (page 6), there is an entry for "Centrelink Child Support Agency", but not one for just "Centrelink" or for "Centrelink Older Australians and Financial Information Services".

Were there supposed to have been separate entries for "Centrelink" and "Child Support Agency" but an error was made in printing the phone book?

From the list of numbers on page 115, I would assume that the most appropriate phone numbers for the Age Pension Card would be 132 300 (Older Australians and Financial Information Services) and 136 240 (Centrelink Phone Self Service). I noticed that there is no White Pages entry for Medicare (but there is one under "Your Government" in the Yellow Pages). The Medicare phone numbers are also on the Department of Human Services page.

I would like to suggest that the Department of Human Services should add the appropriate telephone numbers to those concession cards that do not have them, and review their policy regarding advertising in the White and Yellow Pages so that elderly Australians without computers can more easily find the correct number to call when they need help.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Annette Barbetti
FEDERAL PRESIDENT