

LOBBY REPORT 22 TO 25 MARCH 2010

Our lobby team was significantly affected for this journey to Wellington due to health issues with Dick Stark and Ian Anderson. Therefore, Roy Reid, Violet McCowatt and the writer (Les Howard) were in attendance. The rough weather played a big part in our travel arrangements as Wellington Airport was closed for traffic at various times. Violet's flight was unable to land and was diverted to Palmerston North and then she bused to the capital while I did not arrive in until Monday evening. Unfortunately, this meant that we both missed the meeting with the Ministry of Social Development. Roy managed to get there on time for the MSD meeting in which we also included Age Concern as they are very interested in the John Logan report on the adequacy of National Superannuation and also wish to support Grey Power in our endeavours to have that report adopted by government. This round of meetings was extremely welcoming and all ministers were open and receptive to Grey Power's comments.

Ministry of Social Development

Roy Reid's Report of meeting held with Ministry of Social Development on Monday 22 March 2010.

This was the first meeting of the Lobby visit; unfortunately President Les Howard and Mrs Violet McCowatt had not arrived in Wellington due to bad weather so Roy Reid was the Grey Power representative. This meeting was also attended by Age Concern led by Ann Martin. Dianne Rogers led the Ministry team.

After a quick update on the previous meeting, Mr Tim Bryers gave an update on the Super Gold Card. Business partners have grown by a third since the last meeting. A new directory has been printed but will not be posted to those already on Superannuation but is available at WINZ offices and most Community Libraries or by telephone 0800 25 45 65 and on the website www.supergold.govt.nz. New applicants for Superannuation will be given a copy as part of the application process. All business partners will now display a poster to indicate that the Card can be used (currently 5,100 outlets). They are trying to grow the number of partners in the rural areas so that rural people can use the card in their home towns and they are trying to attract more Dentists to join (currently there are 17 Dentists offering discounts). They are also talking to Legal firms to join. At present there are 54 Legal outlets of which 36 are the Public Trust offering discounts on Enduring Powers of Attorney.

Members can have their Photo on the card by visiting an AA Driving test centre but will need to take an up-to-date means of identification. So far 2% of the card holders have Photo identification on them. The public Transport concession is to be reviewed by May 2010. Submissions close 26 April. A discount on Passports was discussed but is not possible at present.

The Ministry has now setup a Seniors Section and Superannuation will be administered by this group, which is independent of Work and Income. New Zealand has been divided into 10 regions each with a Local Service Manager and Case Managers. They will be working towards moving much of the application process on line to reduce the need for applicants to attend interviews.

Family and Community Services (FACS)

Two programmes for seniors are SAGES –older volunteers mentoring families and individuals needing help and EANP – Elder Abuse contracted to Age Concern.

Older People and International Policy

The Demographic trends show an increase in the numbers over age 65 in 2009 - 500,000 to 1,300,000 by 2050. The number of those over age 85 will treble in this time. This section of MSD has the responsibility for the financial security for older New Zealanders (NZ Superannuation, and Social security agreements and obligations with overseas countries). Also provides support for the Independence of older people by advancing positive ageing priorities. The Minister of Senior Citizens Hon. John Carter has three Priorities for Senior Citizens:

1. Employment of Mature Workers.
2. Changing the attitudes about aging
3. Raising awareness of Elder Abuse and Neglect.

New Zealand has the second highest employment participation rates for those aged 55 to 64 in the World. For those over age 65, 16% are employed. This is due to Universal Superannuation that is not means tested, no compulsory retirement age, anti-age discrimination legislation and a focus on supporting people into work.

A discussion was held on the abatement rate for those on unqualified spouse Superannuation, especially those with a business claiming Depreciation or expenses as allowed by Inland Revenue but classed unfairly as income by MSD. MSD claim that the value of depreciation is a cash income and is available to spend. The difference between MSD and IRD is that MSD spends taxpayer funds on Benefits and pensions

while IRD collects from Taxpayers to pay for Benefits and Public services. Depreciation is a book figure and is not cash as no one pays the amount to the person on superannuation. We have been arguing this case for some time without success. This concern was discussed with both the Ministers of Social Development Hon. Paula Bennett and Revenue Hon. Peter Dunne who both promised to do more work into this problem.

The degree of hardship was also discussed with MSD claiming that 5 to 8% of older New Zealanders live in a state of hardship but those under age 17 has 19% living in hardship. We offered a paper prepared by Mr. John Logan on the under payment of superannuation but MSD declined to discuss the paper until Mr. Logan sent it to MSD. No surprise as John's figures show that there is an underpayment taking place.

Hon John Carter M.P. Minister for Senior Citizens

This Minister always makes us very welcome and it is a pleasure to meet with him. He appears as a very down to earth person and decisive in whatever he does.

We began with the discussion on the Gold Card and in particular the off-peak travel concessions which appeared to be under threat recently. He assured us that the travel concessions would remain untouched and that the government would be negotiating with the transport operators and regional councils in an endeavour to lower the administration costs etc. In the previous week an announcement had been made by Minister of Transport, Hon Steven Joyce that, because of the ballooning cost of the scheme, the off-peak travel would be curtailed. Grey Power counteracted by issuing a Press Release which bought about a quick turn by the Minister of Transport Hon Steven Joyce, who almost immediately rang me stating that he had no intention of curtailing the scheme in any way but that the government would be re-negotiating with the companies involved.

We also discussed the abolishment of the Safe with Age Driving Courses and expressed our disappointment and anger at the actions taken by government. We said that the Safe with Age was very successful in many places and rather than abandoning the courses the government should have replaced the Facilitators where the numbers were not being catered for. We expressed our displeasure also about the meeting called by the Automobile Association to find a replacement course which both Violet and I attended in Wellington where the main thrust appeared to be

a return to the days of the Occupational Therapists and their simulators, which had caused our members so much grief in the past. The cost of the referral by a doctor to the OTs is in the vicinity of \$350 to \$550 dollars and if such a scheme was put in place the cost would put it beyond the means of those on National Superannuation. Discussions were as the result of a remit from Greymouth Grey Power which asked that Grey Power lobby the government for the re-instatement of the Safe with Age Driving Courses. They will not re-instate the courses but will replace it with another course. Both Grey Power and Age Concern will be heavily involved in the formation of such a course.

Elizabeth Knopf and Alison Randall Ministry of Health

Our main concern to be addressed was the reduction in Home Help and Care hours to those who had been assessed in the past as needing care and help by District Health Boards. The reply was that the DHBs would ensure that those needing help would still get it but that some would be reduced and have some their Home Help discontinued. The Government want people to be able to stay in their homes rather than go into Rest Homes but they also want to get value for money. We stated that we were totally against people being assessed by telephone because the only way to do a proper assessment was to see exactly what the home looked like and how those being assessed were coping. The Ministry admitted that mistakes were being made but phone assessment was a very valuable tool and it would be impossible to get around to all those assessed by visiting them in their own homes.

In reply we stated that this was not the fault of the patients and the DHBs should ensure that they have the number of fully qualified staff needed to carry out these assessments and until that happens we will advise all those who have their help and care reduced to appeal the decision. The Ministry said they expected that the assessors should all be registered nurses but at the moment this was not the case as the number of nurses was insufficient. The policy was not to have Home Care eliminated but that those who needed it would receive it. We agreed that there would be cases where patients, after procedures in hospital, were given home help during their recovery which had not ceased, but there were some cases of genuine hardship where people were being stressed because of the Assessment by stealth policy by some DHBs using it as a cost cutting exercise.

In the field of PHOs, the Ministry believes 80 to be excessive and that it is essential many PHOs would need to amalgamate. Some of the smaller PHOs receive a premium payment for funding and amalgamation would see that money put to better use. We have expressed our feelings about the cuts to Home Help etc but also feel that this government is out to cut expenditure wherever it can but we do not feel that the older population, and those most vulnerable, should carry an unfair amount of the cost cuts and we see cuts to assistance as an attack on our members who will be forced into hospitals or rest homes.

Whilst at this meeting, I received a phone call from the Ministry of Social Development requesting an urgent meeting with Grey Power to brief us on an announcement from Hon Paula Bennett.

Briefing by MSD re: Benefit Reforms.

This briefing took place at the same time as the Minister was announcing the benefit reforms in parliament. The Minister had instructed the MSD to contact us in order to advise us of these reforms, something (to our knowledge) that has not been carried out previously.

The main thrust is that beneficiaries would be required to work (or apply for work) or risk having their benefit slashed by up to 50%. If jobs were unavailable, they would assess whether genuine attempts had been made to get employment. Some Sickness beneficiaries who were able to work, would be required to at least attempt to find work and those on the DPB whose children had reached age 6 years would be required to find work where possible during school hours. Some work would be available in the Home Care and Rest Home industries. Those on long term Unemployment Benefit would be required to re-apply for the Benefit at periods of twelve months and those on a Sickness Benefit would be re-assessed after 4, 8 and again at 13 weeks. For those requiring grants from Work and Income, payment cards will be introduced and those with a high number of grants will be re-assessed. The abatement Rate is to be increased from \$80 per week to \$100. This is the amount a person on unqualified spouse can earn before the rate of 70 cents in the dollar is taken in tax. These measures are to come into force at the end of September after legislation been introduced.

We were also told that at last, after 7 years of campaigning by Violet, their offices will now bear signs on their pamphlets and brochures

advising “FREE - PLEASE TAKE ONE” as we have countless times informed them that many seniors are loathe to just “help themselves”.

Office of the Auditor General

This was a meeting I had never envisaged or sought as we had previously had no contact with the Auditor General. The Auditor General is an independent position and is not politically based. The meeting came about because the Office had heard we were making our usual visit to Wellington and they rang me requesting to meet with us (if it could be fitted into our agenda) to discuss a proposed audit of Home Care and, because of the DHBs cutting or reducing these services, we were keen to meet. We discussed the need for Home Help for the Elderly, the Ability to Assess Home Support and the Assessment and re-assessment. We were curious why the Auditor General’s Office was involved and the reply was that they had carried out an audit into Rest Homes and had decided that an audit was required into the Home Help industry. What they were very anxious to have happen was that Grey Power become involved in their investigations and assist them wherever possible in carrying out the audit. We replied we were only too happy to assist in any way we could, to assist our members and the elderly in general. This was a most unexpected meeting but one we believe will be very beneficial to our members.

Hon Bill English, M.P. Minister of Finance.

This meeting was in order to continue our lobbying on a number of remits, mainly from Auckland Grey Power. The first was to the effect that the government resume contributions to the “Cullen Fund” for investment in New Zealand. The reply from the Minister was that the intention to resume the contributions to the fund would take place when the economy was back into surplus and that they were not going to borrow to contribute. He also stated that the original term to get to a surplus situation was 10 years but that had now been reduced to around 6 years and was reducing continually. They would resume the contributions when the economy reaches a surplus.

The second remit was to the effect that the government introduce a scheme of investment in either government or local body bonds with a tax free dividend for those over 65 years. His reply to this was that he would like some more time to consider the proposal. He did not dismiss it out

of hand and it was interesting to note that his adviser from Treasury appeared to favour the idea. He will advise us in due course.

The remit asking for a reduction of 15% in the cost of motor registration for Super Gold Card holders was not agreed to as the cost of motor registration is \$56 per annum and the rest is made up by the ACC levy.

The Minister finished up by stating that National Superannuitants would not be worse off if GST is increased to 15%. Adjustment would be made to ensure this.

Hon Phil Goff. M.P. Leader of Opposition

Matters discussed with Hon Phil Goff were GST and ACC. On the occasions we met with Phil Goff while he was in government, we found him to be one of the most knowledgeable MPs. He has a firm grasp of all subjects and he has at times stood in for MPs who, for one reason or another, were unable to meet with us. He was accompanied by the Labour Spokesperson for Senior Citizens, Hon Ross Robertson.

On the matter of GST, he stated that Labour had been campaigning throughout the country re: the proposed raising of GST from 12.5% to 15%. This, he believes as we do, will have a huge effect on those on low and fixed incomes as those on higher incomes do not spend their whole income to exist whilst those on low incomes do. Another problem of course, is that those who only spend a portion of their incomes to live, can invest their surplus and earn interest as well, without incurring GST as GST is not included in financial transactions. We have been assured by the Prime Minister that superannuitants will not be worse off under the proposed increase but when you look at an example such as electricity, which Contact is set to increase by 5% in October means that on an average monthly account of \$200 the increase will be \$20... The proposed National Super Increase if GST is raised to 15% will for a month also be \$20. This takes care of the electricity account but leaves nothing for any other increases caused by increasing GST.

This minister then thanked us for being so diligent and decisive in our response to the GoldCard Travel cuts.

Hon Ruth Dyson M.P.

It is always a pleasure to meet with Ruth Dyson as she makes us feel very welcome and is always very concerned about the plight of those on lower incomes. Like us, she is very concerned about the cuts to Home Care and stated that she sees this as a very short sighted policy that is being introduced as a money saving arrangement for DHBs. Many of those affected will possibly finish up in Rest Homes or even worse, in hospitals because of the high risk of injuries caused by people having to cope with tasks they had previously had taken care of by their home help. She is totally against assessing by telephone and has stated that the only way to assess a person is to visit them in their homes to see first hand how they are coping. Ruth was also highly delighted about the reversal by the Minister of Transport re the turnaround on the matter of off-peak travel where rather than cutting the services he has now announced that the government will be meeting with transport operators in an endeavour to cut administration costs etc.

Hon John Key M.P. Prime Minister

We spoke firstly about removing the GST content from Local Body Rates and he replied that this would not happen - New Zealand has a GST system that is easy to administer and that there would be no exceptions. He did state that he was aware of the opposition to the financial side of the rates components but was adamant that GST was part of the local body rates.

We then mentioned the price of electricity and he replied that the government would try to see that the increases did not rise unnecessarily but there was a cost of \$4.5 billion dollars required for the upgrade of the national grid.

He assured us that water would not 'sold' and that it would remain as present and finally we asked about a Lower Income Remuneration Authority to set the level of national Superannuation etc. We did not get an immediate answer to this but will be advised later.

Hon Sue Kedgley.M.P. Green Party

It is always a pleasure to meet with Sue Kedgley. Early during our time with her, she said that perhaps Grey Power could get involved with the proposed cuts to National Radio. The cuts will be caused by the freezing of funding and NZ will be faced with commercial radio with lots of advertisements. This is something we should at least look at to see just how it would affect our members.

With regards to the GoldCard off-peak travel, she is of the opinion that the government might find it difficult to have the transport operators reduce their costs as those costs were part of the deal when the scheme was introduced so if these are interfered with, then possibly the operators might just cut the off-peak travel altogether. We believe that it is in the operators' interests for them to be receiving something for off-peak travel as opposed to receiving nothing. However, this might be something we have to take a good look at as it might just let the government off the hook if they cannot get a new deal with the operators the next step could be to cut the services.

Sue was also very scathing about the way the Home Help was being cut/reduced and is not in favour with the telephone assessments. It is in the nature of older people when interviewed by phone, not knowing an assessment was taking place, to say they were fine and managing OK. Probably the best thing when contacted by phone would be to say it was inconvenient to talk right now because of another engagement and arrange a time to be interviewed in person. It would be in the patient's best interest to have another person present at the interview.

Hon Ross Robertson M.P.

Ross is the Labour Spokesperson for Senior Citizens and when we spoke of the pricing of electricity he stated that the government was a major stakeholder in the industry. The price for the utility included a dividend to the government which was really a form of taxation. Perhaps the government needed to prioritise its dividends. The price is a legacy that successive governments have supported since the reforms. We asked if he thought the electricity industry could become a "social utility" as a lobby remit from Motueka suggested, but we did not receive a positive answer.

He then stated that the GoldCard Transport arrangement had come under fire with Grey Power largely instrumental in having the proposed cuts etc stopped and the government now negotiating with the transport operators for changes to the rate of subsidy and administration costs etc. Ross did say he would be in the Mid Canterbury area sometime about mid June and perhaps he could meet with me during that time.

Hon Peter Dunne M.P. Leader United Future Party

As well as being Leader United Future, Peer is the Minister for Revenue in the present government. We spoke of the need for better pay for those people engaged as Caregivers for the Disabled. He said there needed to be a decent career path for these people to follow and that the rate of remuneration should be better.

Re the debate about Private versus Public Health Care he said there should be some sort of rebate for the premiums of Health Insurance. He also stated that elective surgery was reducing in that there were fewer operations for joints, cataracts etc and this was probably because the backlog had been cleared somewhat by the extra funding provided in the past.

We asked him about the way income was perceived by both Work and Income and the Ministry for Social Development for calculating the rate for the Unqualified Spouse National Superannuation. When assessing the income derived from such industries as "hobby farms" etc, Work & Income take expenses running the industry into account when assessing the derived income whilst MSD count the whole as income without any expenses allowable. He said that there should be some common ground which could be taken where two government departments had conflicting policies.

Sue Primrose. Ministry of Health

Sue is the person in the MoH who administers the disability section. She is responsible for Hearing Aids, Spectacles etc and aids required for people disabled because of sickness etc living in their homes. She talked about the price of Hearing Aids and how the MoH was endeavouring to get the prices down. The Aids are sold by the Audiologists and the department was putting the purchasing of suitable hearing aids out to

tender. They wanted a range of choice and a competitive price for hearing aids that were suitable for the patient.

She is also responsible for funding the cost of putting lifts in houses for people disabled because of sickness, but she wonders if this is a good use of allocated funding and perhaps it might be better if those who needed a lift were to shift to other premises. Sue keeps us informed at all times about any changes to those who need aids to live in their own homes.

Hon Paula Bennett. M.P. Minister for Social Development

Hon Paula Bennett is a far different person to the one we met when she first became the Minister for Social Development. She now has a grasp of her portfolio and is a pleasure to meet with. You will probably remember we criticised her somewhat after our first meeting.

She went over the changes to the benefits that the Ministry had briefed us on the previous day and mentioned that the purpose was to keep people in work wherever possible. There would be changes to those on long term Sickness Benefit and Unemployment but the Welfare Working Group which had been established for the purpose of reviewing the Benefit System would not be going anywhere near National Superannuation. The only changes to NS would be for the unqualified spouse rate where the person concerned would have the abatement rate raised from \$80 per week to \$100 per week before the abatement rate of tax kicked in.

We also mentioned again to the Minister the problem faced by people on the unqualified rate faced with both Work & Income and the MSD having different policies when assessing income from business etc. with Work & Income allowing expenses from those businesses but the MSD not doing so. The Minister has agreed to see if a common policy can be introduced.

Age Concern

We meet with Age Concern on every lobby visit to Wellington and have a very good working relationship with them. Ann Martin is always pleased to meet with us and on this visit Age Concern was included in the meeting with the Ministry of Social Development. On behalf of Age Concern, Ann was a little disappointed in the MSD meeting as they did not want to talk about the John Logan report on National Superannuation

and the Ministry did not seem at all interested in the report. This subject will be ongoing.

Age Concern National President, Liz Baxendine, who spoke at our AGM in Marton last year, was also present and was eager to meet with the lobby team and expressed a willingness to continue to join forces with Grey Power on matters of mutual interest. They are very interested in the report from John Logan on the Adequacy of National Superannuation. We also spoke about off-peak travel for Super Gold Card Holders and the fact that many holders receive no benefit at all from the off-peak travel because there is no public transport system in their areas.

Hon Steven Joyce M.P. Minister of Transport

We asked the Minister about compulsory third party insurance and his reply was that this was not to be. His reasoning is that in the UK 92% of motorists are covered by insurance and only 8% have no cover. The same numbers are experienced in New Zealand and in addition we have no fault ACC which covers injury.

We then asked about a 15% discount for motor registration for National Superannuitants. The reply to this was no because the cost of motor registration was only \$56-00 per annum and the rest was made up by the ACC levy.

The Minister asked us who had been responsible for the Grey Power Press Release about the Off-Peak Travel for SuperGold Card Holders and he 'thanked' Violet for her release! He went on to explain that he had no intention of cutting the service (or the Waiheke Island Ferry or the Wairarapa Train Service component) but the government would be negotiating with the Transport Operators etc for a reduction in the amount of subsidy paid and administration costs.

Hon Jo Goodhew M.P. Government Whip

One of the main reasons we meet with Jo is that she is quite heavily involved in the health and care of the older person. Some time ago, she carried out a series of meetings throughout the country to find out what worked and what did not work in this field. When she began these meetings in Timaru, I challenged her on some of the information she obtained and she accepted that challenge. She is of the opinion that

Home Help will not be cut or reduced where it is really needed, but emphasised that there are people who have been assessed as needing Home Help for a period of time (after procedures in hospitals etc) that have not had that help discontinued, and also that some people might not now require the same measure of assistance that they have in the past and could do with slightly lesser hours. She tried to assure us that those who really needed the assistance would receive it.

Hon Annette King. Deputy Leader Labour Party

We arrived at this meeting and met with Annette King, Winnie Laban, Labour Associate Spokesperson for Health and Sue Kedgley, Health Spokesperson for Green Party. The purpose of this meeting was for the three MPs to explore with the Lobby Team, the possibility of an investigation into the whole provision of Aged Care. The three MPs are very keen for the co-operation of Grey Power to investigate both Rest Home and Home Help. They furnished us with a written proposal and they wanted to know 'what and where' changes needed to be made, in what amounts to a follow-up to the investigation carried out into Rest Home Care by the Office of the Auditor General. I asked them if they were aware the Office of the Auditor General was in the process of reviewing the Home Help Industry and they replied they are aware but they would like our co-operation if possible. We stated we were assisting the Auditor General but would be willing and able to assist with this investigation as well. We suggested that they could pose some of their questions in our magazine and on our website to reach our members and receive their input and they seemed thrilled with these suggestions and didn't expect such a rapid and ready response.

It is to be hoped that associations will co-operate and meet with the MPs where possible. The three MPs are prepared to travel during weeks the House is not in session and would be prepared to meet with any associations and or community groups. The times the MPs could travel will be 12 to 18 April, 10 to 14 May, 7 to 11 June, and 5 to 9 July.

Hon Tony Ryall. M.P. Minister of Health.

The Minister, when asked about Home Care, stated he would look at cases brought to his attention. He said that some cases were "rorts" but will attend to any cases that are not. He is aware of problems supporting

smaller and rural rest homes and knew the DHB had sorted out the problems associated with the Golden Bay Rest Home.

When asked about assistance for Care Givers of the Disabled he said that there was support for Parental Responsibility as against Government Responsibility. He also stated when asked about funding for Rural Ambulance Services, that it was more difficult to fund or get a dedicated vehicle in areas of low population.

All in all it was a difficult meeting to get satisfaction for our members but with the current economic situation, I guess that is understandable. I know that will not be satisfactory to our members but at this time it is difficult and we can only keep hammering away until we get results.

Hon Dr Nick Smith, Minister for ACC

The Minister informed us that ACC loss was \$2.4 billion. The 'lions' share' of the deficit caught up with costs up 2% this year. The increases in levies this year would be up 12%. There was a need to cover, not only for cost of accidents, but also ongoing costs where people required ongoing assistance with their injuries. Review cases were being watched to see if they were age related. Motor Registration would be up \$30-00 this year and a question to be addressed is the risk rate for those under 25 years and those over 65 pay less. There could be a case made out for a right to a no claim bonus bought into license.

The cost of Hearing Aids under ACC was discussed. If the loss is work related and not age related, ACC will pay and if a mixture of work and age related, AQCC will pay a share but not the full amount. This will come into effect 1 July. Hoping there will be no need to increase levy after end of this year.

Hon Darren Hughes M.P. Labour Whip

Darren is very enthusiastic and meeting with him is enjoyable. He stated that Labour came through its first year in opposition following the election, in good shape. Labour spent the second year pointing out the differences between the Parties and will spend the third year in an attempt to win the next election. He stated that Grey Power was mainly responsible for retaining the off-peak travel concession for Super Gold Card Holder because of the very prompt Press Release and objections to

the proposed cuts to services. He believes Grey Power is a strong force around parliament and that all parties recognise that fact. He feels the cuts to Home Help are cost cutting exercises but will not save money in the long term because of ongoing effects by the cuts.

Hon Simon Power M.P. Minister of Justice.

This is another Minister who really makes us welcome and is always ready and willing to talk to the Lobby Team. We asked him about matters he promised to address when he first became the Minister and he replied that the Gang Problems were all addressed, the tools needed for the Police were done. Legislation has been passed to make it more difficult to obtain Bail. Regards the review into Legal Aid; the board that distributed the cash has been disbanded and lawyers cannot take advantage. Hearing of cases has been sped up and audio/visual evidence should see fewer opportunities for problems when ferrying prisoners to and from court in prison vans. The Victims of Crime scheme is well advanced and the \$50 comes into force on 1 July as legislation has already been passed. The bill for the review of the MMP system of voting at general elections was tabled in the House 25 March and the Electoral Finance Act is to be reviewed.

In conclusion I would report that this was one of the better rounds of meetings we have had. The Office of the Auditor General requesting a visit from the Grey Power team is quite a coup, as is the request from three MPs to assist in a review of the Age Care Industry both Rest Home and Home Help. The team was very well received wherever we went and we managed pose all Associations questions that were asked of the lobby team and to raise issues and concerns that had been received, with answers still pending on a few. Although the agenda is demanding, it needs to be to get the best value for money. To attend and take part in twenty two meetings over such a short time is a very good effort and our lobby team do this on behalf of Grey Power a number of times during the year so I thank the whole team for the work they have carried out.

Les Howard
National President
Grey Power Federation Inc