



**Sharon Grierson MP**  
Federal Member for Newcastle



# Media Release

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## **NEWCASTLE & CENTRELINK DESERVES BETTER**

Sharon Grierson has today backed a campaign by frontline Centrelink staff to improve services to the public by properly resourcing the organisation, better managing workloads, and simplifying policy.

In Newcastle, Centrelink processes more than 61,000 payments each fortnight. We have the second highest rate of disability support pensioners in Australia.

Frontline Centrelink staff do a good job under difficult conditions.

Under the Howard Government they are being asked to do more with less.

Since 1997, more than \$1 billion has been cut from Centrelink's core funding – resulting in staff cuts.

Workloads have increased and staff and have had to bear the brunt of poor policy decisions by the Howard Government.

The Government's continued failure to reform flawed policies like the family benefit system is a constant source of frustration for customers and staff alike.

Centrelink staff are also the messengers for government policy changes, and frontline staff are often subjected to community anger and violence when debts and breaches are implemented.

The range of incidents includes threats, physical assault and being accosted in public places. At times, police have had to intervene in order to restore safety in the workplace and community.

Centrelink and its staff need to be freed of the red tape and need to be properly resourced so they can continue to deliver a quality public service to the community.

I am happy to be supporting the CPSU *Centrelink Pledge* today. Centrelink staff and customers in Newcastle deserve a better deal.

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