



Office of Hon Paula Bennett

Minister for Social Development
Minister of Youth Affairs

Monday, 30 July 2012

Director of Human Rights Proceedings
PO Box 6751
Wellesley Street
Auckland

Dear Mr Hesketh,

I have on previous occasions expressed to you through my counsel and to Ms Fuller, when I met with her in person, my regret at the personal cost that this incident has caused Ms Fuller. The purpose of this letter is to formally convey that.

I strongly support the right of individuals to participate in and comment on government decisions. It is essential to a functioning democracy. I was therefore pleased that Ms Fuller took the opportunity to express her opinions on the Government's policy changes.

As you know, I took the view that it was appropriate for me to respond to some of Ms Fuller's comments in order to provide what I considered to be information relevant to the public debate that was taking place at the time. I acknowledge that you consider that I was wrong to do so and that this resulted in a breach of Ms Fuller's privacy.


As you also know, I do not accept that view. But the purpose of this letter is not to further debate the merits of our respective positions.

What I do want to do is to record my acknowledgment of the personal cost that the resulting public debate has caused Ms Fuller. I was personally shocked and concerned by the unpleasant, hurtful and personal comments some members of the public made about Ms Fuller. I am also distressed that such comments have been repeated following media reports about Ms Fuller's complaint. Individuals who participate in public debate should not be subject to that kind of treatment. It was certainly never my intention that Ms Fuller would find herself in that unpleasant position.

I understand that Ms Fuller wishes to move on with her life and to put this unfortunate incident behind her. I hope that she is able to do so and that this letter may help to bring this matter to a close.

Given that this matter has attracted such a high level of media and public interest, it seems sensible for this letter to be made public to ensure the accuracy of any commentary and to bring the matter to a close by avoiding any ongoing media speculation. I understand that Ms Fuller is happy for that to happen. To that end, I confirm that if asked about the matter I will direct the questioner to this letter. I trust that the media and other interested parties will respect Ms Fuller's desire to move on with her life and to stay out of the public spotlight. I wish her all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paula Bennett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Paula Bennett