

1st July, 2008

Dear Sir,

I wish to make a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth's inquiry into better support for carers.

Having been a Carer for my husband for 14 years and saving the Government hundreds of thousands of dollars before I needed to place him in an Aged Care facility at the age of 51, I was appalled at the way I was treated by Centrelink and other agencies with whom I was dealing with.

All our respite and home help finished the instant he was in care regardless of whether I was coping or not. Centrelink did not know what to do with us as he was in Aged Care but was not an aged pensioner. Time after time I was asked what I had been doing for the past 20 years, as originally I had left employment to raise our children. I actually received eight differing answers as to what would happen to our pensions and it was obvious that they did not know how to handle our situation.

I now work three days a week, which is not good enough to satisfy Centrelink. The fact that I still have to make medical appointments for my husband and accompany him to them does not come into the equation. Nor does the fact that after working my three days, I am so exhausted physically and mentally that I can hardly think straight. I still must Job Search. Anything I earn also affects his pension and therefore I find myself subsidising his accommodation fee.

Having to put our loved ones in permanent Aged Care is stressful enough without having all these other items to contend with.

I believe the Government can better help Carers by finding a solution to this type of problem by having one centrepiece of reference for services. One agency with people trained in all aspects of Carer's problems and situations, who can then show a bit of empathy while guiding us in the right direction instead of making us feel worthless. One central place to get answers from instead of going from one to another and in the end still not knowing what is expected of us.

Thank you for taking my views into consideration as part of the Committee's Inquiry. I look forward to reviewing any recommendations you make to improve life for Carers in Australia.

Yours sincerely,

Heather