

## Inquiry into better support for carers

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Individual Submission from Liza

Social Worker and parent carer of two children with disabilities

### **the role and contribution of carers in society and how this should be recognised;**

- Carers contribution should be recognised through media and allowing the community to hear and get in touch with carers lives and daily challenges. This media coverage also needs to include the diversity of care situations and types of carers, and ways that the community can assist carers to lighten their load.
- The Role of carers should be recognised through provision of Carers leave that can be used when needed in employment. This also needs to be available to male carers, or partners of carers when times are particularly difficult.
- Carers do need financial recognition through supportive payments, which provide some peace of mind and stability to their lives.
- National Carers card, which allows them discounts in services, in particular services that help to maintain their caring health and wellbeing. Eg health gym membership, massages, etc.

### **the barriers to social and economic participation for carers, with a particular focus on helping carers to find and/or retain employment;**

- Carers should have equitable access to respite and support services nationally. Currently there are many different systems, services and priority structures. This is confusing for carers and makes it sometimes too difficult to receive services. For carers who move to another state, the structures and support services are totally different and often involve going onto new waiting lists for services, and are totally inaccessible unless one has resided in state for particular time period.
- Current respite and support services are too few and inflexible to provide proper coverage for carers to find and retain employment. This is particularly so for carers who have to leave career positions to provide care, and are then not able to continue in profession as there are no part time or flexible arrangements available in higher level jobs. Eg. I have to have 6 different forms of care and respite in order to maintain a part time job.
- Support and respite services also need to be available out of normal work hours for those carers who are attempting to work shift work, or who need to travel as part of employment.

### **the practical measures required to better support carers, including key priorities for action; and**

- Increased financial assistance to carers in purchasing specialised therapy, support services and equipment that makes their job easier.

- Support services that are flexible and can be available at short notice to better reflect normal social networking environment. EG to be able to go out to dinner with friends with a few days notice, rather than having one hour booked for the same time once per month.
- The development of corporate sponsorship programs and Seeding grants that help to establish new social enterprises which can provide flexible and responsive services for carers that enable them to become self sufficient, and that, do not depend on high levels of ongoing government funding.
- Flexible housing models that can be utilised in transition phases such as aging carers who may like to share accommodation for short periods with their adult son or daughters with disabilities.

**strategies to assist carers to access the same range of opportunities and choices as the wider community, including strategies to increase the capacity for carers to make choices within their caring roles, transition into and out of caring, and effectively plan for the future.**

- Develop a transition model of care, which includes an awareness of the changing role of carer throughout life of caree, and as caree needs change. This may include ongoing eligibility to services which may require less or greater services depending on the stage.
- Better carer access to multidisciplinary teams looking at "whole of life" planning as part of their carer role. Carers could have access to financial planners, solicitors, social workers and health professionals at various stages in order to set up life pathways for themselves and the people they are caring for. This currently is a huge barrier, as is too costly, inaccessible and there are not enough professionals with expert knowledge in these areas who can provide assistance. Preferably, a one stop shop is needed so that carers can work from a wholistic approach in developing plans that also incorporate regular breaks, enrichment in relationships, independence, legal and financial goals. A "Carer coach" or "support facilitator" may be a resource that could be accessible to carers and their families. Eg. We have paid thousands of dollars to solicitors and financial planners etc, who have been useless and as a result still do not have effective plans in place.

Liza