

Doc 4/8/08
Submission No. 1174
 (Inq into better support for carers)

Sent: Thursday, 3 July 2008 9:02 PM
To: Committee, FCHY (REPS)
Subject: Submission for Inquiry into Better Support for Carer's
Importance: High

Committee Secretary
 Inquiry into Better Support for Carers
 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family,
 Community, Housing and Youth
 PO Box 6021
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

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.

I am submitting to the Inquiry because I feel that carer's are under valued in society especially at a political level.

1. The role and contribution of carers in society

As a carer, I feel that my role is to take care of my family as best I can. This is made so difficult sometimes when the pressure and strain of caring for my child with a severe disability gets overwhelming. Carer's are hugely undervalued in society. If it were not for carer's looking after disabled family members etc, then the Government would be faced with an enormous situation that even they would not be able to handle.

2. The barriers to social and economic participation for carers

As a carer, I face a multitude of problems. One of the biggest problems is social isolation. We do not have a wheelchair modified car so I cannot leave the house if my husband is not home to lift our son in and out of the family car. My son is now 17 years old and I cannot physically lift him myself. This is not fair on our son or our family. We are currently hopeful of applying for vehicle modification funding through VAEP but this is a long and tedious process, not to mention having to find the 'gap' funding. It is such a constant battle and being under so much day to day stress and strain means I constantly battle depression and anxiety.

As equipment for disabled is limited it is quite expensive, the funding that is available for this does not go very far. As an example, for a basic wheelchair van we are looking at \$25,000 for the conversion alone. The Government is contributing up to a maximum of \$10,000. This leaves families having to buy a vehicle and then find another \$15,000 or more to modify. We also have to cope with funding for incontinence aids. We currently receive about \$480 per year which only lasts about 3 months. All of this puts a large barrier up, forcing carer's to stay at home and not participate in the community as money has to be directed to the essentials. I currently work part time but am constantly faced with the hardship of finding 'care' for my disabled child in the school holidays. I sometimes wonder if the system is set up for me to be at home full time and not in the workplace where I can better contribute to society.

3. The practical measures required to better support carers

As a carer, I need help with the issues that face the disabled. For example, we were assessed as having 'urgent' needs but have been on the wait list for a Family Support Options package for over

a year. This is unacceptable. More money needs to be injected into the disability sector to ease the stress on families. After all, if we all decided to give up our 'caring' role, it would cost the government millions of dollars. All we ask is a little bit of help, acknowledgement and support. The government seems to find money for other projects and tax cuts but somehow disability services is never given priority.

4. Strategies to assist carers to access opportunities and choices

I think the Government can better help carers by listening to them and taking their needs seriously.

Increasing funding for carer's for both living expenses and equipment is also required as is increasing access to support services such as case managers, counselling, financial assistance, funding packages etc

The 'red tape' needs to be minimised. A lot of families are filling in the same forms for different but similar government departments. It is emotionally draining and stressful to complete the same forms with the same information over and over again. There are so many families like ours struggling to cope, who only just manage to get through the day. Surely its time to help those in need and support the disabled and their carer's.

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

Maria and Raymond

Print your name

3-7-08

Date