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Submission No. 1288

(Better Support for Carers)

Brendan

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth
PO Box 6021
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

I also sending you some information that I got a few years hope this will help

Dear Secretary

I wish to make a submission to the house of Representatives standing committee no Family Community Housing and Youth's inquiry into better support for carers
Keep Helping the kids they need ^{you} help

I am a young carer. The person I care for is my mum I started when I was 4 year old
I would sit on the lounge room, because my mum would not worry if we ~~would~~ stayd in the lounge room
I feel that my role as a young carer is very rewarding, because when you loved your mother
It feel right, I was loved we have a wonderful family.

The things I do in my carers role are help around the house, get our food all ready, by Dad and
and drinks, mum ~~get~~
I face the following problems used get really bad migrane and still have them the
and some friends from schoe so I never because if mum was well I would go
I miss out on social events because I was shy and never wanted to go, I did go to the cinema
but I did not like it becaes did not meet them

I have difficulty attending school/work because because the ~~house~~ no because Mum got me
home study, we ~~know~~ loved that because I did not worry then it was good
I worry my future because Mum keeps saying that ~~she~~ was then ~~has~~ her fault for me
me because I could have done much better if she was not sick I study you

The things that stress me most about being a young carer are mostly, I wish I could ^{you would want}
~~do that to me~~
Be the one to make my Mum well
Things that would help me are going, but ~~was~~ that did not come true but now mum can't walk but I am still

I think the government can better help young carers by ^{there for her}
as of money to make them feel like ~~some~~ ^{them} ~~like~~ ^{like} ~~them~~ ^{them}
good like a little them ~~the~~ 5 Dollars and tell them to ~~pass~~ ^{pass} that they are ~~speac~~ ^{speac}
Remember it would be helpfull for people to undrestand if you write down examples of your
own experiences I think the govement have not looked what we are 4-5-6-7- we do become
over looked as you do this job because we love that special person because we love them
Thank you foe taking my views into consideration as part of the committee's inquiry. I look
forward to hearing about outcomes that will improve the lives of young carers

Yours Sincerely
Brendan

you know my mum must have written to every body about young cars but
no one wanted to know because mum got one person that rang mum and said
he will be working for the govement soon and Mum sent him all the informader
but ~~we~~ never got back to us, even as sick that ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~that~~ did not stop her
even that I was 4 I am shere out there are a lot of children like me don't ever
say that it is only a job and you have to do it because that not how it works our
Mum + Dad look after us children all our lives and if we can't do that much
edon't do it, I found out that we do it because we want to help them, it is
a good feeling, what happend to me I started when I was 4 years at first it
was not ~~easy~~ ^{easy} but as Mum got sicker and more sicker I was there for her
I helped mum to the toilet and back to ~~bed~~ ^{bed} and heaps of other things, I am
now 23 years old, when I turned 18 years old I got a letter saying ^{said}
now we will pay you to look after your mum, I just what have I be doing. ^{plse}

My mum was so angry so mum and Dad talk it all in front of me. I said no you need to relax for a while, Dad is giving up his job and he is taking over, I did feel sorry for dad because his wages were from Centerlink and not been able to work any more now that mum can't ~~work~~ get around anymore only with a walker and wheelchair. Mum told me to go and have some fun and go out and do what you should have done years ago. I now call mum at night just to see if she is OK, mum said she is very proud for me.

So remember now we will get a video and sit there together and we love it, Kids I don't smoke and don't drink or do drugs so come on Kids you don't need all that stuff to make you feel better. Be a good come love what you do and don't worry what other Kids say, they did not come from a good home, you will be proud of yourself and tell your Kids how cool you are and will be.

Sorry for such a long letter but I got a lot stuff out and I feel better.

Thank you
Breidan

He was a carer for 15 years to his Mum

Facts About...



CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS AS CARERS

Brendan [redacted] looked after me
for 15 years and never asked to go
out or play with his school friends.

Q. Who is a young carer?

A young carer is a child or teenager expected to undertake care responsibilities beyond those generally considered appropriate for a person of their age. They care for parents, siblings and grandparents with a disability or chronic or mental illness.

The young carers considered most at risk are those caring for parents, particularly sole parents. In many cases children in these situations are caring on their own with little or no help.

Q. What do they do?

Young carers do everything an adult carer does. There are cases of children toileting parents, changing catheters, overseeing medication, cooking and cleaning. Children as young as nine have been known to get up in the morning, care for a parent with a severe disability, going home at lunch to care, returning to school for the afternoon and then going back home to care again. Others miss school if they feel they are needed at home.

Q. How many are there?

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates that there are 33,800 Australian children below the age of 15 who provide care to a family member who has a long term illness or disability. Of those, 14,500 are 'main carers'.

86% of the children identified in the ABS survey were aged 10 to 14, 15% were aged 9 or less. 13% were caring for more than one person. The numbers of boys and girls involved were approximately equal.

(These numbers should be regarded as **rough estimates** as ABS were not allowed to interview children under the age of 15, and these children were identified as part of a survey of people with disabilities.)

CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS WHO ARE CARERS

Q. What are the effects of caring?

Caring at a young age can have a huge impact on educational, social and emotional lives, as well as implications for physical development, the quality of childhood and opportunities for the future.

The impact of caring on a child depends very much on the context in which it occurs. A child helping with the care of a beloved family member may gain strength and self-esteem from the experience. A child struggling alone to carry out tasks beyond their strength can suffer permanent physical and psychological damage.

■ Emotional effects

Young carers are often afraid to tell people what is happening in their home in case the family be broken up. Peer pressure also dictates it is best not to be seen as different and open to ridicule.

Many times during caring the parent/child relationship will also be reversed which can lead to heavy emotional burdens for a young person who usually would not have to plan, worry about the future or provide emotional support. The anxiety about the well-being of the cared for can be heightened when they are away from home and often a lack of understanding of the extent of illness or condition exacerbates the situation.

■ Physical effects

For young bodies performing heavy caring and domestic tasks, the physical effects of caring can be serious. Back injuries are common and even a dislocated hip is known in one case.

The long hours demanded and the extent of the physical tasks required can also take a hefty toll.

■ Educational effects

Being late for school or missing it all together, failure to complete homework and lack of concentration due to tiredness or concerns at home can be detrimental to the young carer's education development and therefore career opportunities.

Unfortunately many schools are not sensitised to the issues facing young carers or know which children are in that situation. Teachers can be a vital source of support and their actions will seriously influence the levels of stress the young carer experiences. Parents are not immune to this either and may also face discrimination for lack of participation, an inability to pay fees and their child's absences.

■ Social lives and friendships

Many young carers will not tell their friends about life at home because of embarrassment and believing their friends will not understand. Friendships tend to develop in the playground yet with a disrupted school life this can be effected. Lack of spare time, money and being unable to bring friends home is also another hurdle to maintaining friendships.

In some cases, the cared for may also restrict the young person's socialising, either directly, or by making them feel guilty about going out or anxious about leaving them.

CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS WHO ARE CARERS

Q. Why are there young carers?

Children and teenagers become carers often for the same reasons that adults do - maybe there is no one else to do it, the family may not receive enough services, they could do it because they love the person they care for or maybe they did not even question what their responsibilities because it seems like the natural thing to do. Most have a strong sense of responsibility and anxiety; few know of any way to access help that would allow them to keep their family together.

It appears, from the small amount of research that has been conducted, children and teenagers are most likely to become sole carers through a combination of:

- the young person(s) and the person with the disability are isolated from other adults who could provide support;
- the disability is progressive, starting out as mild and becoming more severe over time, so that the child slips further and further into a full-time caring role, without anyone realising what is happening.

Children are particularly vulnerable in sole parent families and in cases where the disability carries a stigma. Parents with a psychiatric disability may be concerned about losing the child if the situation becomes public.

Q. What should be done?

Above all, there needs to be greater public awareness of the existence and needs of young carers, especially amongst people in contact with children, teenagers and people with disabilities.

All those treating people with disabilities and serious illnesses - eg GPs, mental health professionals, hospital staff working out discharge plans - need to routinely ask about the presence of dependent children at home and their possible involvement.

All people in regular contact with children - eg teachers, school counsellors - should be aware of the existence of young carers, know the signs to look for which indicate a young person's involvement in caring, and know how to ensure adequate support.

The government needs to research the issue, to determine the numbers and needs of the young carers throughout Australia, determine how best to support them with limited resources and actively take steps to provide that support.

Above all, we need to respect young carers. They are not heroes and most are not passive victims - they are children and teenagers with the courage to support people with disabilities and maintain their families in the best way the know how, with little or no help. We need to listen to them and learn what they require.

CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS WHO ARE CARERS

Q. What is being done?

The Carers NSW, Inc was recently funded to prepare an information and support pack for young carers and secondly, to prepare a training manual for service providers and teachers who are potentially in contact with young carers. These packs are yet to be released.

■ Young Carers Pack

The Young Carers Pack will be directed at carers aged 12 - 18 years with the purpose of validating their feelings, helping them to understand their situation and know that they are not alone, provide practical information on how to get assistance and how to look after their own well-being. The Pack will be provided in the context of a family information kit.

■ Health Workers & Teachers Training Pack

The Training Pack will aid the identification of young carers and sensitise workers to their unique needs. Strategies will also be provided to facilitate and improve the work of service providers with the children and teenagers.

■ Young Carers Project Officer

No Project Officer is currently employed and funding is being sought to establish this position.

■ Other Support

A number of holiday camps for young carers have been held each year. These have been very successful and it is hoped, depending on funding, many more camps can be arranged.

A **Young Carers Fund** has been established to administer educational scholarships and provide funding for more activities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION call 1800 242 636

■ Fact Sheets in the Facts About... series include:

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Carers	Children & Young Adults Who Are Carers
Abuse	Community Care Packages
Advocacy	Home & Community Care Program (HACC)
Attendant Care Program	How to Make a Complaint
Carers from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds	Carers NSW, Inc

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REFERENCES:

Carers Association of Australia, Inc
Carers National Association (UK) Young Carers Support Project

Information contained in this fact sheet was supplied by the relevant authorities and is believed to be accurate at the time of publication. Whilst every care has been taken in its preparation, this fact sheet contains only guidelines in relation to its subject matter.

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