

Submission No. 369
(Inq into better support for carers)

A.O.C. 2/7/08

Sent: Sunday, 22 June 2008 11:48 PM
To: Committee, Reps (REPS)
Subject: BETTER SUPPORT FOR CARERS

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

Leoni I

22 Jun. 08

Dear Secretary

This letter is presented to hopefully assist our Government's inquiry into BETTER SUPPORT FOR CARERS. I realize this issue is a colossal aspect for Government to address, it is also however a colossal undertaking for many carers.

I have been a carer for my mother for six years and within this period of time I faced living in a remote area, a stroke that left my father also dependant on my care, relocating my parents and myself from their own home to a more medically equipped area, the death of my father and the ongoing decline of my mother. Initially I had not entertained the extraordinary decisions and responsibilities I have had and continue to encounter in an effort to provide the familiar home functions that have kept my aging parents together. I am now trying to instil comfort and reassurance in my mother that I will continue to care for her. As a carer, although I often face a multitude of emotions, I now feel so depended upon that, even in my own states of wayward frustrations (and yes I do have a few occasions) I just know I could never abandon this status until I am no longer required.

As a carer, there is no clock watching. There is no "when I finish work I'll ..." Being a carer is no ordinary position. To many carers it is keeping a loved one alive. There is the responsibility of medication and hence the correct administration. There are Doctor's appointments, and many other medical appointments and often for us carers our own management of medical records for whom we are caring. And it is transferring our cared for to be transported, often along with their medical equipment e.g. wheelchair, oxygen, etc. Some-times it is our sole responsibility to assist our cared for if they have had a fall.

Usually there is one carer, often more than one person to care for. Always equipment.

As a carer for the aged, I am so grateful for the foresight of nurses and the dedication of departments such as A.C.A.T, Silver Chain etc. These dedicated people work on overload, however their assessments and professionalism ensure proper implementation of equipment to assist.

However because carers often have to be self-reliant requesting assistance may be overlooked. I really feel these departments must be supported with priority placement in Government budgets.

Carer's also need improved financial income. Although respite periods have been allocated and rightly so, if a carer considers respite unfortunately our financial condition restricts us so much we usually remain where we are.

Being a carer it is often hard to know what to ask for, we just feel as if we have to keep going. It is a such a solitary world some-times. And I think we sort of become used to that. We start "staying in".

We start worrying about leaving our cared for with some-one else, after all, we have encountered situations and experiences and have a bonding with some-one we love which mustn't be abruptly severed. We become possessive, we fear some-one may hurt the person we care for. We have learnt to "read" them. They have in a sense, become us. We don't do everything right and our emotions or sense of guilt can at times engulf us. We can resent, be it other family members, friends or even our pet goldfish! But then not everyone can be lent to be a carer. Sometimes I am not happy with myself for the way I handle things, and I look around and see some- one who could have done it better, yet I know they just wouldn't be able to do this all the time.

Our Government is conducting an inquiring into an area where extraordinary people live and give. The immense diversity of the roles of Carer's of Australia cannot be argued with. However Carer's contributions should be well and truly recognised and appreciated by the Australian Government.

Thank you with respect

Leoni I
Carer.