

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

Rec 4/8/08
Submission No. 1205
(Inq into better support for carers)

Dear Secretary,

We 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.

We are submitting to the Inquiry because Villa Maria supports, empowers, and provides information, networks and services for, and advocates on behalf of Carers and their families. We acknowledge the various issues that face carers from: recognition and awareness issues of carers in the community, social support and inclusion required for carers, the need for carers to access appropriate information and services in a timely manner, through to the difficulty of traversing numerous support systems of community, State and Commonwealth funded services, and the need to continue to support carers with appropriate allowances and respite.

1. The role and contribution of carers in society

In summary, carers assist, support, and empower people at home and in the community through their life journey and play an invaluable role in preventing the need for services such as residential care, and in the prevention of morbidity, and mortality.

2. The barriers to social and economic participation for carers

We have highlighted some of the barriers above. More specifically the current funding of services available and the time required to meet carer needs do not match. Consequently a review of the funding arrangements, time allocation and criteria for assessing support needs has to be reviewed to ensure we are meeting carer needs.

3. The practical measures required to better support carers

In light of the submissions already submitted to the Inquiry, we add the following measures which should be adopted to better support carers:

- Adopt a consultative approach on carer issues via an appropriate advisory group;
- Ensure that financial measures are adequately indexed via an appropriate review of current financial limits and current trends in costs of living;
- Ensure that the timeframes for funding services is appropriate given the changing nature of carer needs; and
- Recognize that not all carers identify as a carer and or liked to be labeled as carers, and consequently review the options on creating awareness of support for all those who care for people in the community.

4. Strategies to assist carers to access opportunities and choices

We think the Government can better help carers by:

- Reviewing the overlap between funding and service options offered by Commonwealth and the States with a view to integration and clear guidelines on the funding of services;
- Establishing appropriate technical support for carers and community providers via a helpline on issues such as referrals, funding of services, and dispersal/use of funds.
- Improving access and awareness of services at all levels, Commonwealth, State and Community e.g. Extending the Direct2Care pilot as a 'one stop shop' with a view to marketing it as a service for all carers;
- Providing funds/grants to community providers to market their services; and
- Providing funds/grants to research the application of providing direct information technology links to referral sources e.g. using information technology to provide links to Carers support services for General Practitioners on Medical Director, Pharmacists on FRED etc...

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

Yours sincerely

Shaheen

Signature

On behalf of Villa Maria

Organization

2 July 2008

Date