

Rec 21/7/08
Supplementary Submission No. 9.2
(Inq into better support for carers)

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth
PO Box 6021
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Submitted by email: fchy.reps@aph.gov.au

14 July 2008

Dear Secretary,

Inquiry into better support for carers

This is a late entry into the debate and follows my two earlier submissions of 27 May and 29 June 2008. This is a peripheral matter which you may not consider important. It is a matter that has recently become important for me as an 84 year old carer for my wife who suffers from severe depression.

Whether my caring role will become a permanent task or not is uncertain; but at this moment in time, my task as carer is 24 hours per day. My constant presence (because it is what she wants), and keeping my own mood in reasonable order when coping with her moods that vary by the hour. In this I am helped by our psychiatrist; and – to keep me in good order – by my hobby.

So what has prompted this late submission? It concerns my own relaxing moments, and what I can do when I have them. It concerns, not only carers, but retired old people generally, many of whom are carers helping to keep each other – husband and wife – in working order.

So, let's go back to 1984 when Senator Don Grimes introduced the Assets Test that affects the pension. Those assets included everything that the pensioner then had, and may have accumulated in his life for his retirement; hobbies, a home workshop, a model railway, any collection, an interest in philately and postage stamps as is mine. This is my hobby in my own home to which I escape when I can; yet it enables me to be handy in my home when needed.

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In 1984 I asked how I could possibly assess the value of my collection. It had never occurred to me to put a value on it. It is a hobby, one of my hobbies almost as old as I am. Do I have to have it valued? "Oh no, don't do that; just put a figure on it".

But the monetary value of this hobby (as would be any other) reduces the pension. It is a tax with the apparent aim that the owner should realise these assets and sell them (at garage-sale prices) and use the money for his living expenses at a time when he most needs the relaxation of his hobby.

I need not go on. The argument is self evident.

Yours sincerely,

Peter