

AOO 19/11/08

Thursday, 13 November

To Whom It May Concern.

I am writing in regard to funding currently for carers to access healthy lifestyle centres. With the Obesity rates rising rapidly, surely it is in the Governments best interests to ensure that carers have access to healthy lifestyles in particular fitness provided by local gyms. If carers do not receive the funding to access such centres the risk to their health and longevity is at risk.

Obesity related illness affect millions every year, surely prevention would save the government thousands if not hundreds of thousands. Access to healthy life style centres curb depression, isolation and encourage social interaction, healthy lifestyle and exercise thus enabling for them to care for longer. Without access to such centres and unhealthy, potentially sick carers the government will inevitably end up paying millions in the long term in care, crisis care etc etc

A Personal Story

I care for three disabled girls two with a moderate disability and a third with High functioning autism. Being in a rural area we struggled to find respite workers to be able to provide adequate care for our girls so that I could access respite. So every year our DHS packages were starting to go down the drain. Finding my caring load at times overwhelming and suffering from being obese at 120 kilo. I decided to try a local healthy lifestyle gym. Losing over 36 kilo, (32 at the gym) my life has changed and its for the better. Without the funding it would have been impossible for me to access on a carer pension. The centre is my life line, I've meet amazing people there and it gives me time out from my endless caring role.

This week I discovered that that funding is now being limited and in most cases organisations no longer want to fund it. Surely for a mere 29.99 a week its petty cash compared to the cost of providing a respite worker to my home 4 days a week for 2 hours. The approximate cost of such a service is according to 2007 figures is \$12,310.00 per child (2 being eligible) per year compared to the cost of a gym membership @ 29.99 a week which is \$1,559.48 per year.

Let alone the cost to the government if I was to die from an obesity related disease and the three girls were left in care. I am not sure of the figures there but did read somewhere that its in the region of 70,000 per year. Let alone relieving the drain on our hospitals and local medical centres due to obesity related diseases.

If that's the case doesn't it make economic sense?

I would like to see the government committed to the health of carers providing options such as healthy lifestyle gyms that include diet and exercise for the sake of those they care for and the carers themselves.

Options that could be available -

- * Voucher system - giving carers vouchers to access gyms and healthy lifestyle centres.
- * Funding lifestyle centres to run carer specific classes.
- * Allowing carers with DHS packages to apply for funds to the gym and lifestyle centres

* Funding organizations such as Yorralla, Carer Respite etc to enable them to provide carer specific funding for lifestyle centres

Please don't pass this opportunity by to make a difference in the lives of countless carers across this country. Help us to live longer and care effectively for our loved ones,

Thankyou for your time.

Yours Sincerely

Rachel