

Submission No. 451

(Inq into better support for carers)

A.O.C. 2/7/08

25 June 2008

COMMITTEE SECRETARY  
INQUIRY INTO BETTER SUPPORT FOR CARERS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON FAMILY,  
COMMUNITY, HOUSING AND YOUTH  
PO BOX 6021  
PARLIMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

I wish to make a submission to the inquiry into Better Support for Carers, specifically older carers.

I feel that my role at 84 primarily is sole carer for my husband (90) who suffers from dementia, depression, delusions, anxiety, parkinsons and extreme hearing and memory loss. I face the problems of isolations, deteriorating health and well being and can not fully participate in volunteering and social life.

There are no visitors since the caree's delirious and hysterical behaviour is too distressing to witness. The things that stress me most are the perpetual repeated questions, distrust, abuse and denigration od what I do and say.

Help is needed with survival strategies, and I think that small group counselling is the best solution. I I also need to have practical help and support in and around the home, and transport to improve quality of life with outside contacts and respite. Importantly I think governments can better help carers by having a single point of access to services. Commonwealth Center link has the facilities to do this, but does not have appropriately trained staff to identify the main problem and arrange the place to effectively solve it, whether physical, social or mental.

My own experience proved that it is just too difficult and takes too long for people in need to get through the mine field out there. Our distant son realized that I needed help and the GP recommended a clinical psychologist, but I was too exhausted and depressed to take either advice. Eventually in 2005 son took it upon himself to track down and arrange for Aged Care Assessment Team to come, which happened 3 months later.

After another 6 months of phoning departments, councils, hospitals, societies, committees, offices, agencies, etc. and 3 false starts Home Care Services agreed to provide 2 hours of Domestic Assistance fortnightly.

It was a relief to have someone pleasant in the house and to get some help with cleaning. Gradually I regained enough composure to attend a stress management course at Carers Network, now known as Northside Community Connect, This was a lifeline which I continue to use with gratitude for counselling and conversation.

The years of struggle make me wonder if more public funds are spent on administration and publications than on really providing service to carers who contribute so much to the Australian Society with so little consideration.

I do not wish governments to simply throw more money around but that they endeavour to get better value for money to ensure that carers actually get the services and support they deserve.

Thank you for taking my views into consideration as part of the committee's inquiry. I look forward to reviewing any recommendations you make to improve life for carers in Australia.