

Committee Secretary

Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth

P. O. Box 6021

House of Representatives

Parliament House

Canberra

ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

CARER'S SUBMISSION

I 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.

As a Carer, I feel that my role is important in facilitating the health and happiness of my wife who is eighty years old; has Type 2 Diabetes for more than ten years: as well as heart/blood pressure problems: loss of balance occasionally and suffers from shortness of breath. I assist my wife in her daily living activities; outside shopping; driving activities and companionship; twenty four hours per day. This support allows my wife to enjoy an independent lifestyle in her own home. I feel that this role should be recognised more substantially by the Government as it saves the taxpayer money in providing assistance to persons with health problems.

I face the problem that my role is not recognised by the Government because the person I am caring for has a variety of medical conditions but this is not sufficient to be granted Carer's Allowance or Pension. I receive no financial assistance or recognition by the Government for my role as a Carer.

In addition, I think that all Carers should be supported by the Government as they have contributed as taxpayers all their lives and are now performing essential voluntary roles that would involve considerable administrative and financial work by State, Commonwealth and local government bodies if Carers were not available.

I think the Government can better help Carers by:

- (a) Removing all jurisdiction over Carers from Centrelink and creating a separate body with responsibility only for Carers. This is important as Centrelink is overstretched dealing with a wide jurisdiction of matters and the interests of Carers are often not met.
- (b) Ensuring that the organisation responsible for Carers is independent of Centrelink and has a more favourable approach to Carers;
- (c) Ensuring that the tests used to determine eligibility for Carer's Allowances or Pensions not be based on financial income and asset tests (like age pensions) as the financial status of the Carer should not be the issue, rather the value of the voluntary contribution to the quality of life of the person being cared for.
- (d) In addition, the medical practitioner should be able to certify that a Carer is providing care so that the Carer meets any tests for Carer's Allowances or Pensions. The problem with the current medical tests for Carer's Allowance is that the medical conditions appear only to form background and the points system to decide whether a person receives Carer's Allowance is based on ambiguous questions. The points system used by Centrelink to determine Carer's Allowance lacks transparency as it appears to be based on a rating system which is not disclosed to the applicant. The issue is that a Carer should be recognised and receive financial assistance even if the person being cared for can go to the toilet, on their own, and walk with assistance. The test should not be based on physical immobility but rather is a Carer providing valuable assistance in the home and in the community for the person being cared for. This would be better determined by a medical practitioner rather than by a public servant using a points system which lacks transparency.

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.

Yours sincerely,

Francis