

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

Submission No. 778

(Inq into better support for carers)

Dear Secretary

A.O.C. 15/7/08

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.

I am submitting to the Inquiry because...

Carers have been largely forgotten by all areas – government and private sector.

I have never felt so alone as when I cared for my frail aged Mother. I was made to feel worthless by many, mainly public sector, who placed barriers in front of me all the time. I had to justify my caring role time after time.

There are no rewards in caring – now that my Mother has passed on I am “working” tirelessly to ensure that other carers don't have the same experience

More information is attached on a separate sheet

1. The role and contribution of carers in society

As a carer, I feel that my role is...

Undervalued to the extent that most carers give up and can't face the constant struggle every hour of every day in the face of opposition from the agencies who are supposedly in existence to support carers and those they care for.

We all know the savings that are made for the nation by carers who care in the home and therefore don't encroach on the health dollar to provide extra hospitals, nursing homes, nursing staff, doctors, ancillary services. So why make it so hard for carers to access everyday services, etc.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

2. The barriers to social and economic participation for carers

As a carer, I face the following problems ...

Unable to afford many basic everyday items. Unable to afford to travel far with the high price of fuel and as most rural areas have no public transport, if a carer does not have a car, they are further isolated.

Unable to participate in community events or programs – e.g. weight and strength classes, tai chi classes, - because of little or no support in accessing respite. Economically, there's never enough money to participate. Holidays are out of the question!

Unable to leave the person being cared for because of cultural backgrounds – cannot locate a person to provide respite who speaks the language of the person being cared for.

Unable to afford simple treats – haircuts, pampering with a massage to relieve the stress of the 24/7 caring position, coffee at the bakery, cinema visits.

Unable to leave the person being cared for because the carer is not “armed enough” with the knowhow of how to deal with the feelings of guilt imposed, intentionally or not, by the person being cared for. “You can go out but I’m always stuck here”

Unable to attend any training sessions because they are always held in capital cities or major provincial centres too far away.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

3. The practical measures required to better support carers

As a carer, I need help with ...

Knowing exactly where to go to get the help I need. There is not enough published information available. Mostly I have learnt by word of mouth and then the information came too late.

Trying to navigate the internet to find information is not easy. And I find that there is not much there anyway.

Investigation by the Commonwealth of agencies who you give the funding to to ascertain how they spend the money, whether they are meeting the needs of carers (because I can tell you they are not), and instruct them through workshops which carers can attend **LOCALLY** to give them the information about what carers **NEED**.

More recognition of the role of caring and the millions of dollars they are saving the government each year by providing home care. Increase the pension/allowances, increase the bonuses and/or give vouchers to carers to redeem for petrol, white goods, simple little pleasures that will make the caring role more valued and less stressful

More information is attached on a separate sheet

4. Strategies to assist carers to access opportunities and choices

I think the Government can better help carers by ...

LISTENING to carers. **INVESTIGATING** how agencies spend your money on carers (or are they spending it on themselves – e.g. one agency I know of has their staff massaged monthly. So where is the money coming from for that!).

Providing training sessions in the locality of the carer. And ensuring that there is respite available so that the carer can attend. Providing fuel cards to enable the carer to be able to afford to attend.

Really **THINKING** about whether an agency can deliver what you are funding them for before you award them the contract. Do they have experience?

Sitting down with a carer and listening and not requiring the carer to write what can be very difficult at times to put down on paper.

Having **EMPATHY** for the carer.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

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

CHERYL

Print your name

1 JULY 2008

Date