

RDC 16/7/08

Submission No. 813

(Inq into better support for carers)

Dianne

Committee Secretary,
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth,
PO Box 6021
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Review Committee with information about the needs of Carers.

My suggestions are attached.

Yours sincerely,



for Dianne
23.6.08

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO CARERS' NEEDS

Dianne , June 23, 2008

*The status and recognition of carers must be given more prominence.
The services provided by carers have been estimated to save government \$60 billion p.a.
It is not right to expect carers to suppress their personal needs and ability to provide for
their own futures because they act out of compassion for those they love.*

Carer health

- Free flu injections
- Subsidised gym memberships (plus respite) for carers
- Subsidised dietician counseling
- Increased access to counseling for carers/ care recipients

Carer Education

- Free First Aid training or refresher courses (incorporate this into the Carer Payment as a requirement for claiming benefits)
- Education in Living with Alzheimers/ Dementia or other conditions of ageing
- Educating carers in the self-management of long term medical conditions
- Training credits scheme

Financial Assistance

- Superannuation (9% minimum) added to Carer Payments. For existing carers who have not been able to work and provide for their own retirement, a loading or bonus should be attached to the age pension, depending on the amount of years they have dedicated to caring
- Stamp duty concession if the family home is sold and another purchased to accommodate the care recipient
- Car registration concession / fuel subsidies / car modifications to suit wheelchairs/ reduction of stamp duty when car needs to be changed to transport disabled care recipient
- Increase Carer Payment to a decent standard to cover living costs which are inevitably higher when there is a disability in the family
- Why not a "carer bonus" similar to the baby bonus? If people need to give up their employment when they become carers, this is every bit as deserving as a mother choosing to have a child
- Access to training for educational purposes as well as recreational and therapeutic needs
- Christmas or holiday "loading" or bonus – these are the worst times financially for carers

Lifestyle

- Improve suitable day respite for under 60's care recipients and care recipients who do not have dementia, thus making it more viable for carers to have time out
- Increased and improved respite accommodation
- Similar rehabilitation services and assistance as is given to insured patients if the care recipient is not compensable

Families and Siblings of care recipients

- Provision of tutoring for other children in the family as required
- Access to counseling/respite for siblings
- Siblings to access part carer payment for their help in looking after the care recipient
- Increased funding for support agencies to provide Christmas and other seasonal activities for siblings who might otherwise miss out
- Legal advice re guardianship laws/ estate planning etc for spouses

Summary:

I don't know any carer who chose this as their vocation. Carers are typically people who take on the role through compassion and/or necessity when a catastrophe occurs to their loved one.

Carers have limited funds to provide for their needs and those of other family members if they have had to give up work. The impact on other family members is devastating.

Carers providing for their own retirement is out of the question.

Last year before the Federal election I wrote to Andrew Southcott (our local MP) requesting superannuation payments be added to the Carers Payment. After two months I received a reply from the Treasurer's Department via Mr Southcott.

It stated that carers were given a bonus at budget time and they should put this aside to provide for their retirement! I should have kept the letter as an example of bureaucratic arrogance but I threw it away because it was so insulting.

"Carers are the collateral damage of their loved one's catastrophe"

Dianne
23.6.08.