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Submission No. 934

(Inq into better support for carers)

Jeannette

June 30th 2008.

Re Information Sheet: Inquiry into Better Support for Carers.

Committee Secretary,
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing & Youth,
P.O. Box 6021,
House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA. ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

Using your examples I wish to make a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing & Youth into better support for carers as I come into this category.

1. I fell that my role is: Not understood or appreciated.
2. I contribute to Australian society by: Saving them money by being a carer, this also saves a place in a nursing home which I'm sure would cost considerably more than the carer allowance paid to me.
3. I face the following problems: Financially, lack of friends apart from other carers, lack of respite, not able to go out socially.
4. I can't fully participate in social life because of: All of the above.
5. I am financially struggling because of: High cost of food, petrol, etc.
Also the high cost of medication for 2 people. 2 single pensioners living in the same home must EACH reach the same P.B.S. criteria as a married couple, this I feel is MOST UNFAIR.
6. I would like to work: Unfortunately not applicable I am 72 years old. Wish I could earn some extra money, it would certainly make life easier.
7. I worry about my future because: What will happen to my son should I die before him. He could not survive financially & needs help with everyday living.
8. The things that stress me most about being a carer: Financial worry, plus all of the above.

My son became ill 17 years ago, prior to that he ran a successful business, his father was diagnosed with cancer at the same time consequently we lost everything. My husband passed away 8 years ago after a very long illness.

My son & I now live in a mobile home park, the current rent is \$112 per week, plus all other costs, electricity, water, insurances, repairs & maintenance, phone, etc. We also pay into a Private Health Fund, this is absolutely necessary as my son often

needs hospitalisation, I also don't keep the best of health.

Should one of us pass away the one left could not manage as with only 1 pension coming in all the bills still remain the same as when there were 2 people to share the costs.

I need help to solve these problems, as this is a constant worry.

Supported accommodation specific for people with Acquired Brain Injury would be the best solution for my son, should he die first I feel the only way out for me is to try and get a place in a retirement village.

My son attends Hunter Brain Injury Respite Options and Headstart, both these organisations charge fees and when he goes out on respite he needs money for coffee, entertainment, etc., this all adds up.

If not for the A.B.I. Carer Support Group, I would have very little outside help, as this is usually my main contact socially we offer each other understanding & support which all carers badly need.

I think the government can better help carers by better understanding our role and the many problems faced by carers, worry financially, loneliness and worry about "what will happen to our loved one."

Apart from the financial problems of everyday living I am 72 years old and have a 92 year old mother, she lives in her own home so I pick her up to take her shopping, doctors, etc., this uses petrol which also puts a strain on my budget. Sometimes I feel my problems are just escalating.

My only source of income is the Government Pension and Carers Allowance, whilst I appreciate these payments, life is very hard and becoming more difficult, we don't smoke, drink alcohol, or gamble apart from an occasional \$2 lottery ticket, we don't go to clubs or eat meals out, however, we still have trouble to make ends meet. We must also try to save a little for unforeseen expenses that may occur e.g., doctors and specialists fees not fully covered by Medicare, car problems, repairs & maintenance at home, also our funerals.

I have never had problems accessing services.

Yours faithfully,


Jeannette