

Hello

Enclosed is my supplementary submission for the Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth on Support for Carers. If any part of my submission is published I would like my name withheld as to protect my youngest son identity who suffers mental health issues.

Below is a list of suggestion on how Carers may be supported:

In reference to my main submission and my main and present issue which is affordable housing for Carers and their families. Apparently Carers save the government a considerable amount of money per year because they believe in quality of care is more important than any thing else. This saving to the government seems to be only valued by the public when affordable housing and public housing is discussed as an issue. Why? I believe Carers should be supported with affordable housing without question. It is terrible to have to consider ceasing my Caring role due to the lack of affordable housing.

On the odd occasion I have attended varying activities run by the Carers Association and I have always left feeling valued. It would be great if there attitude and knowledge could be expanded throughout society. Education of public service (especially departments commonly used by carers) and hospital staff may change attitudes towards Carers and increase community awareness of how valuable they are and the extent of work they freely contribute to the community. Perhaps organising Carer of the Year Award would publicise the extent of Carers work throughout the community and value Carers at the same time. Prizes are not really important but would be nice. Things like free electricity for a year, a reliable car, food vouchers, furniture vouchers, specific prizes for young carers like a lap top computer etc. Organisations could be asked to donate these items for free to increase the community spirit in valuing Carers.

As highlighted in my main submission being a Carer and raising a family at the same time has mandatory sacrifice however I believe the quality of care that I provide can not be duplicated by any organisation. I am grateful to the government for the yearly Carers bonus. It makes me feel acknowledged and valued by the community for a little while. I get a small reprieve about money worries for a short time and usually spend that money on the electricity bill or something that my children have needed for some time like a new quilt etc. I have always just made ends meet because I chose to be a carer and raise my family. I felt it was a good value to bestow on my family that caring about people is more important than things. However at present without the financial support of my ex husband and my problems with housing it is difficult to continue with this great morale. For the first time in my life I feel financially prejudiced for being a Carer. As my sister earns the highest income in the house (she receives a small superannuation income and is on disability support pension) I do not qualify for priority public housing. I am on the high needs public housing list but that is not helpful to me as I need accommodation now. If I discontinue to be a carer for my sister my family will be eligible for priority housing or other housing for low income earners. My delima is obvious and my own mental health is an suffering. I am grateful to the government for their financial support as I am on a Carers pension but it is not easy to survive on this when you have a family to support and no stable housing.

I have found volunteers to be the most valuable support over the last 22 years. I have volunteers taking my sister out which is my respite and she enjoys it because they they do normal things. My son has just become involved in Menslink which is financially supported by the government (which is great) however the mentors are volunteers. In both cases they strive to encourage my sister and son to participate in normal activities or and activities I can not afford. I have found disability groups not helpful for my sister as she prefers to be involved in the community activities as she see herself as a normal person. I am very grateful for the volunteers and believe the government should acknowledge them more often and value their service to the community more often. Perhaps they could be offered free fuel.

It is difficult for me to think of practical help for Carers as I use to get all that from my ex husband. It is a new chapter in my life to strive to do absolutely everything. I guess organisations like Home Help are good because you can get help with gardening and cleaning but unfortunately there capacity to help Carers is limited due to the lack of there own resources. I guess if the government could support these organisations more then more Carers could use these services and the Caring role may become less of a burden.

Lastly I think it would be great if Carers could have extra support when they are exhausted. There seems to be a few organisations around who are prepared to give you phone numbers of organisations who may be able to help you however what a Carer really needs at times is someone to do the lobbying for them.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk about my Caring roles. I hope it has increased your insight about Carers and most of all I hope it will increase the support for Carers

Yours sincerely