

Submission No. 72

(Inq into better support for carers)

A.O.C. 16/6/08

10/06/08

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth

Dear Secretary,

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 care for my son who has a significant intellectual disability and Autism. He is 17 years old and stands at approx 6 feet. Luckily for me he still has 2 years at school-but after that the future is very uncertain. I feel that my role is no only a Carer, but also all the other roles that a mother takes on. I have other children, a husband, a part time job and a life.

I contribute to Australian Society by caring and providing endless hours of unpaid support for my son. (Carers Allowance is \$100.60 per fortnight which would pay for barely 3 hours care at current rates.) My son will never be able to be left on his own so I need respite for EVERY outing that is outside school hours. This includes work. (A daunting prospect)

I worry about my future for several reasons. I worry that my fitness and health will decline and I will no longer be able to care for my son. I find that already I am unable to care for my son on my own ,overnight ,at all. I would like more flexible respite that caters for OUR needs, instead of blocks and times that are largely inflexible .I now need to use respite when ever my husband is away. We don't have a Government package to spend and I would like more affordable extra respite options. I had one respite provider price out from 3 p.m. Friday until 9 a.m. Monday at over \$3000! Clearly my son will not be going there!

I also worry about the future because there doesn't seem to be any forward planning with regard to After School Options and Housing Options. Clearly my son will need fully supported housing in the future-which is interesting because at the moment there are NO options for this available. Also he needs fully supported programmes once school finishes and again options for this are extremely limited.

I want my son to have a life, to have opportunities and somewhere safe to live.

I constantly worry about what is going to become of us. As my husband and I get older our capacity to care for our son will reduce at the precise time that we are required to increase our caring. If Carers were supported adequately in their own homes they would be able to function for much longer before hitting a wall and so the need for supported housing could be delayed-at a massive overall saving for the Government.

The thing that stresses me most about being a Carer is the relentlessness of it. Not being able to see the end is frightening , both for us and our son. Not being able to plan our future, or his, is also a grave concern.

In summary I need help with more flexible, affordable extra respite. This could be achieved by opening more respite houses or exploring more respite options. Conditions for Carers could be improved by increasing the Carers Allowance. The amount provided currently is grossly inadequate.

I also need help with future arrangements. This could be achieved with better forward planning to provide adequate Post School Options and Housing for our increasing disabled population as they mature and age.

Thank you for taking my views into consideration as part of the Committees Inquiry. I look forward to reviewing any recommendations you make to improve life for Carers in Australia.

Yours sincerely

Helen