

Submission No. 1117

(Inq into better support for carers)

AUG 29/08

Sent: Wednesday, 2 July 2008 12:04 PM
To: Committee, FCHY (REPS)
Subject: re:Inquiry into better support for carers

House Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and YouthCommittee activities (inquiries and reports)**Inquiry into better support for carers**

Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs,
 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP

To whom it may concern,

I wish to make some comment on the subject of better support for carers, in response to the Committee's request.

I am currently care for my 95 year old father, who is a self-funded retiree on a modest income. Of necessity, I have left my employment and taken on fulltime caring duties, as my father is too frail and needs assistance with daily living and business matters. Like many self-funded retirees, he wants to leave all his accumulated monies and property to his family, and has therefore refused to go into nursing care, even though he would probably be better off in this type of establishment. (My inheritance will not be sufficient for me to be self-reliant and I will eventually have to live on the aged pension.)

It has long been policy to encourage elders to remain in their own homes as long as possible, with assistance from various organisations. Many elders, such as my father, do not want to use external assistance, do not want strangers coming into their homes, and do not want to pay for these services. Therefore it comes down to family members to provide the support they need. My concern here is that persons like myself are then forced to exit the workforce, foregoing their wage and superannuation, and having to rely on government assistance. I know that because of this, my retirement circumstances will be rather bleak compared with what they might have been. Unfortunately elders do not recognise the fact that they are placing their family carers in a difficult situation.

It is possible that if nursing home care were more affordable for self-funded retirees, they may be more accepting of this situation and their families would not have to rely on the Carers Payment. For people like my father, their daily needs are simple - a bed, toilet, shower, regular meals, medications monitored, basic nursing care available. Any other facilities are extra luxuries and not required necessities. Why can this not be provided on a reasonable weekly rental rate?

I struggle with my fathers care - I am not a nurse and often find it hard to know how to proceed with things like, for example, wound care. We are able to get a doctor to call once a month, he is the only one in our district who can do house calls, and has to come from several suburbs away. I do not know what I will do when my father becomes progressively more frail - I would be physically unable to lift him - and he has refused an ACAT, for now at least, although I may have to force the issue. Places in nursing homes are hard to get, and you need to go on a waiting list. If he was on a list for some time I don't know how I would care for him during this period, and there is nowhere I could temporarily place him. I believe there are even waiting lists for respite now.

What I am saying boils down to this - instead of pushing the "stay in your home" line, make it a simpler, cheaper, more available and more attractive option for elders to go into care. Do not force self-funded retirees to drain their funds which they have carefully accumulated and wish to leave to their families. Do not force people in the 40-60 age bracket to give up employment to care for their parents.

3/07/2008

I hope this will be of some assistance in your enquiry, and that some good may come as a result.

Yours sincerely,
Claire