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Submission No. 1154

(Inq into better support for carers)

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

25 June 2008

Dear Secretary,

We are a group of individual family carers who 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.

As family carers we feel that our role has been imposed on us and that we have been placed into a situation over which we have no control. Becoming a family carer no matter the age of the person or the medical condition/s of their care recipient is life changing with an emphasis on no longer having a life of our own.

Family carers feel extremely undervalued and that their situation is not understood by anyone who has never experienced the role. We carers receive a lot of lip service about the difficulties we face, the great job we do and the money we save government but there is a very real lack of concern for our well-being.

Family carers face the following problems:-

- Financial difficulties – ongoing costs of the care recipient e.g. medications, continence aids, mobility aids, Day Centre respite fees, residential respite fees, home help fees, personal care fees, transport costs just to name a few.
- Depression, loneliness, isolation, breakdown of family and personal relationships, concern about the future, financially and starting life over again especially for carers who have had to put their own lives on hold while they care for a loved one.
- Financial difficulties e.g. mortgage/rent payments, vehicle maintenance and every day living costs.

Family carers need assistance with:-

- Flexible home and residential respite, that caters to the individual needs of the carer and recipient.
- Increased financial assistance with continence aids, residential respite fees and mobility aids
- More prolonged rehabilitation for stroke patients.
- Helping couples with social support so that they can maintain their relationship.

The government can better help family carers by:-

- Reviewing and increasing carer payment.
- Carer Allowance should be means tested.
- An exemption or reduction of the Safety Net Scheme limit for people who have been diagnosed with chronic medical conditions requiring multiple ongoing medications.
- Reviewing Aged Care Assessment, currently the assessment is low care and high care with the latter assessment seen by the medical profession as automatic permanent entry into a High Care Residential Facility. Aged Care Assessments should be assessed on an individual basis and more Extended Aged Care Packages made available, currently the packages are limited and it can take months before one becomes available.
- Recognise that every care situation is different and should be assessed on an individual basis.
- Streamlining of Service Providers as currently there are too many providing the same services.
- Recognising that many family carers who have had to put their own lives on hold for many years experience difficulties adjusting to life when their caring role ceases

Thank you for taking our views into consideration as part of the Committee's Inquiry. We look forward to reviewing any recommendations you make to improve life for Carers in Australia.

Yours sincerely

Submission Co-ordinator
Lyn

Signatures and addresses of family carers involved with the preparation of this submission.

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