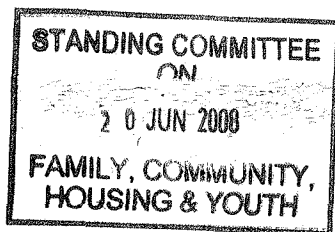


10-06-2008



Submission No. 276

(Inq into better support for carers)

A.O.C. 30/6/08

Committee Secretary,
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth.
P.O. Box 6021,
House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
Canberra A.C.T. 2600.

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 am a 64 year old Disability Support Pensioner, I have diseased lungs (C.O.P.D.). I am the Carer for my Wife, who has suffered with Multiple Sclerosis for over Twenty (20) years she also receives the Disability Support Pension.

In March last year (2007) my wife was involved in a serious car accident, due to this car accident she then spent the next Twenty four (24) weeks in hospital.

Before the car accident my wife had minor weakness in her left arm and left leg, she used a walking frame out side of the house, if she had to travel for extended distances or time, as when doing household shopping.

My wife now has limited use of her right arm, and very little movement in her right hand. Due to these added disabilities my wife now finds herself totally dependent on me for almost all of her daily activities, whereas before her accident she was almost completely independent

I as my Wife's Carer I face the following problems,

I have to ensure that I can safely leave my wife alone for the necessary length of time that is required for me to perform any particular task, for example washing clothes or tending to or feeding our chooks. or going up to the Hotel which is also our Post Office to collect our mail as we live in a small village and do not get mail delivered.

Due to my own lack of good health, I have to visit my own Doctor every two weeks for ongoing medical treatment, as a round trip to see my Doctor can take as long as four (4) hours, this includes approximately one and a half (1.5) hours travelling time. Because there is no suitable and affordable care available I have to take my wife with me to visit my Doctor and we then make this trip into a social outing by having a cup of tea or coffee at the local cake shop.

Recently I had to have some repairs done to our car (1992 Ford Falcon) the repair workshop required the vehicle to be delivered to the workshop early in the morning, the workshop is at the town of Young, which is approximately forty five minutes drive from our home. As there is no public transport available, and no suitable, affordable respite care available for my wife, the only way that

I was able to get the repairs done, was for both my wife and myself to stay over night in a Motel at Young, so that I could deliver our car to the repair workshop on time for the repairs to be carried out

For us to be able to stay overnight in the Motel I had to bring with us personal disability aids for my wife,. Thankfully the management of the Motel generously allowed us to have the use of the Motel Room, free of charge during the day to store my wife's disability aids, as we had to wait until the afternoon to be able to pick up our car, normally Motel Rooms have to be vacated by mid morning or another days rent has to be paid, so just a simple thing like getting necessary car repairs done takes a lot of organisation.

Another area of concern to me was the modifications required to be done to our home, before my wife was able to come home from Hospital.

I had to relocate our washing machine and laundry tub into our garden shed, to allow our shower to be accessible using disabled aids. I also had to construct external ramps to allow for the use of a wheelchair, internal ramps were built with the help of H.A.C.C. regrettably H.A.C.C. is only able to carry out minor modifications to people's homes.

My wife, at times requires the use of a "mechanical lifting device" to be able to transfer from one position to another, for example from bed to wheelchair or to toilet, the lifting device that we have the use of is unable to be used in our toilet and bathroom, due to the doorway leading to our bathroom and toilet being too narrow for the lifting device to fit through, so due to my wife's disability and the number of disabled aids that are required for me to be able to care for my wife, with any degree of dignity we have found it necessary to carry out Major Modifications to our home to be able to continue living in our own home.

As both my wife and myself are dependent on the Disability Support Pension, I am also receiving the Carer's Allowance and we are unable to obtain other financial help, I am forced to carry out the Necessary Major Modifications myself, by becoming a Owner Builder, as this does allow me to carry out most of the work by myself as we are unable to pay for hired help, as you can see any form of help would be greatly appreciated.

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

Carer Kevin.