Mrs Heather

Submission No. 733
(Inq into better support for carers)
A·o·C 14/7/08

30th June 2008

Secretary
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth
PO Box 6021
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 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.

My role as a carer involves supporting my 29year old profoundly disabled son Luke, who has ABI. He has a high degree of cerebral palsy on both sides of his body, is blind in half of each eye, has the use of only one hand, walks with great difficulty (uses wheelchair when accessing the community), has been assessed as being aged approximately 5 years, weighs 100kg, takes medication for high blood pressure and seizures, and has behavioural problems.

I have contributed to society over the past 25 years by working on disability committees in our local community, and supporting all disability issues both physically, to the nth degree, and financially.

My caring role affects my life by being the main carer for Luke. This is a 24/7 job. I find this both financially and physically draining as we are a farming family now experiencing the worst drought in Australian history. My husband works 7 days a week to keep us viable, but the drought makes that an uphill struggle.

Finding employment that fits in with the limited support that we have, requires understanding and flexibility from both employer and service provider. Living in a small rural community 45kms from a major town, places barriers against the limited employment opportunities.

The practical measures that would better support me are more support hours for my son to enable me to work more hours to help support the family. Respite – the age old cry – is always a blessing and very unattainable, particularly because we live 'out of town' and Luke requires one on one support.

Any increased funding by Governments seems to be spent on propping up Government departments that are staffed by people with no idea of what a family with a disabled member goes through. Any increased funding should be spent on ground level, with input by knowledgeable people - a network of carers put in place to handle the needs in a local cluster.

The needs of country people are funding for transport, and respite services. These are sadly lacking in our area – Lockyer Valley. The needs for profoundly disabled people must be addressed as they require more one on one support.

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

Yours sincerely

(Mrs) Heather J