



SUBMISSION FROM ANNECTO - THE PEOPLE NETWORK TO INQUIRY INTO BETTER SUPPORT FOR CARERS

annecto, the people network, is a Victorian based non-profit and membership based incorporated association with a mission to improve opportunities and choices in the community for people with a disability, older persons and their carers, who are usually, but not always, family members. On an annual basis we reach approximately 2000 people through planned support services, approximately 800 through an information network and many more on an occasional basis through the approximately 20,000 telephone calls made to our After Hours service.

The majority of carers who seek assistance from annecto are parents of an adult son or daughter with an intellectual disability or the spouse, son or daughter of an older person who requires assistance to remain living at home. The majority of these people are living with the person for whom they care.

This submission puts forward what a number of carers and also annecto staff have been saying for some time in relation to support for carers.

THE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF CARERS IN SOCIETY:

Caring is part of the social fabric. Many carers tell us that they care deeply about the welfare of the person for whom they are caring (often a son, daughter, spouse or parent), and do not believe that there are other (equal or better) acceptable alternatives to current living arrangements. In many instances there are no alternatives. Concurrently, caring takes a huge toll on their health, finances, access to employment and social isolation. Some older parents of an adult son or daughter with an intellectual disability hope that eventually there will be a government funded place for their son or daughter. They are anxious about whether their son or daughter will be well cared for if/when they are too incapacitated to care for them.

HOW THIS ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION SHOULD BE RECOGNISED:

PRACTICAL MEASURES REQUIRED TO BETTER SUPPORT CARERS:

- Recognise the importance of carers and that support for carers is not the same as, but is intrinsically linked with, what is available for the person for whom they are caring.
- Service and support should be available around a flexible plan based on individual needs and 'menu' of options, which take into account emergency, medium term and longer term planning. For example the details of support arrangements required for a carer to remain in or re enter work would be different from the details of support arrangements for an older parent of a person with a disability, or for the details of the arrangements for a long term couple where one person has an acquired disability. A carer whose health or mental health is in jeopardy may require information about, and access to specialised services. National and state disability standards, and work in Australia and internationally on 'person centred' practices mean that there is much on which to draw in increasing the flexibility of service and support options.
- Investment in industry training and development should include awareness of the role of carers and opportunities for carers to be employed by a support agency under certain circumstances, including access to training.
- Particularly in relation to carers of a person with an intellectual disability, a major concern is what would/will happen to this person if the carer was not there. It is possible to plan more appropriately for this support prior to the occurrence of a crisis. This planning would involve the person concerned, their family/carers, key service providers and close friends. When sufficient planning measures are taken at the individual, population and service system level, then appropriate alternatives can be developed. These may include access to affordable and/or shared equity housing with individual in home support.

annecto would be most willing to discuss or expand on any of the suggestions made above.