

ABC 2/9/08



Ms Annette Ellis MP
Chair
House Standing Committee on Family,
Community, Housing and Youth
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers

Dear Ms Ellis

I welcome the opportunity to provide further comment on counselling services, for consideration of the House Standing Committee as requested at the *Inquiry into Better Support for Carers* public hearing in Brisbane on Wednesday 20 August 2008.

As outlined in our submission to the Committee, National Seniors Australia is calling for greater recognition of the health and wellbeing needs of carers. An Access Economics (2005) report prepared for Carers Australia entitled, 'The Economic Value of Informal Care,' found that 72.4% of Australia's primary carers experience some form of detrimental effect from providing care, with 29.2% often feeling worried or depressed. National Seniors Australia therefore believes that greater funding for support services such as respite care, counselling and care training would improve carers' ability to carry out their caring role.

The Network of Carers Association delivers the National Carer Counselling Program to assist carers to cope with their caring role. According to Carers Australia's Federal Budget Submission 2008-09, during 2006-07 the Network provided 19,109 counselling services to 6,449 carers, an average of 2.9 sessions per carer. Carers Australia have highlighted in their Federal Budget Submission and through meetings with National Seniors Australia that the Network is unable to meet demand for carer counselling due to the level of allocated funding. Carers Australia has written to the Department of Health and Ageing requesting an increase in the National Carer Counselling Program funding.

According to Carers Australia, carer stress was the major reason carers present for carer counselling. Grief and loss, anxiety and depression are among the other main reasons. Because of the increase in carers presenting to counselling services who experience suicidal ideation, Carers Australia is currently collecting data on the issue and will be presenting a report based on their research to the Department of Health and Ageing, which will provide an analysis of the effectiveness of the counselling intervention, and appropriate recommendations.

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Should the Committee require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Anna Perfect at the National Policy Office in Canberra on (02) 6230 4588.

Yours sincerely



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Chief Executive Officer
26 August 2008

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