

Submission No. 800

(Inq into better support for carers)

AOC. ~~16/7/08~~ 16/7/08

1st July 2008

Committee Secretary
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Family, Community, Housing and Youth
P.O. Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra Act 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

I am a Carer, who after a number of years of Caring,
finally applied for the Carers Allowance, yesterday
The paperwork is onerous. It took most of yesterday, to fill
out the eighteen pages for Claim for ... Carer Allowance. Then go
to the doctor to have the six pages filled out then wait
40 minutes in the general inquiries queue to lodge the paperwork
"Form SA 336. 0712 Claim for Carer Payment +/or Carer Allowance
Caring for a person 16 years or over", question 31
What is your CURRENT marital status? The choices are
Married
Partnered (de facto)
Separated (include de facto)
Divorced
Widowed
Never married or lived in the same home with a partner.
I ticked the last box. Why does Centrelink need to know a persons
sexual history? I was repeatedly asked, "You never married
or lived in the same home with a partner???" My reply, "No"
I was asked again, even louder, "You never married or
lived in the same home with a partner?!?" My answer "No"
I was asked a third time, "You never married or lived in
the same home with a partner?!?" "No", my reply.
"Oh, you are single!" "Yes", my reply. "Oh, they have changed
the forms, why don't they ask, are you single?" My reply,

-2-

"I do not know. That's a question I should be asking you!"
You are made to go through hoops to get the Carers Allowance.
Earlier in the day, I requested Centrelink, Ringwood, Victoria
provide me with assistance in filling out the forms. I waited.
Peter came out & informed me, that since my mother had not
seen the doctor to have the Medical Report filled out, there
was no point in requesting assistance to fill out the other form.
I said I had a copy of last year's Medical Report filled out.
Peter, told me,

that I was going round in circles and there was no point
in my asking for assistance to fill out the forms, until
the Medical Report was filled in. (I sort assistance elsewhere)
Peter walked off, quiet pleased with himself, I was left
unhelped. At 2pm I took my mother to her doctor's
appointment, so the Medical Report could be filled out.
I then returned to Centrelink, Ringwood, waited in the
general inquiries queue to hand in the completed paperwork.
It is exhausting. I believe the paperwork has unnecessarily
been made complex to dissuade people from applying for the
allowance.

Carers contribute in society because we look after people in their
own homes, and as such reduce the numbers of people, who
would otherwise be in Aged Care Facilities. This saves the
government a lot of money. I feel the Carers do not get
the support they need. We need Respite, it costs over \$30 per day.
The \$500 Bonus Payment for Older Australians allows for
the cost for about 2 weeks of Respite per year. Carers need
more than two weeks respite per year. The bills still keep
coming in, where are Pensioners expect to find the rest of
the money, so their carers can have their allotted respite?
There is an economic barrier from allowing Carers to receive
their allocated respite. Carers should be paid for their Caring
Role, in a streamlined system of bureaucracy.

I believe Carers should be paid a Carers Pension for their on-going repetitive day to day care they provide to the people they look after. It is not a easy job. In my situation I am faced with the repetitive questions. It is not easy. Sometimes you would like to send information via email. They assume you can afford to connect to the internet and pay for the on-going costs. Carers are economically disadvantaged.

A lot of my time has gone into going round and round in circles to maintain my mother's supply of her Alzheimer's medication, ARICEPT.

Getting PBS to authorize the prescription for ARICEPT, is a minefield of bureaucratic red tape. It is exhausting. The problem lies in the cost of the medication \$154.47 for 28 tablets, taken one tablet daily. Attempting to get the script involves taking the person repeatedly to doctors to be re-assessed for the mini-mental test because PBS claim they never received the ~~test~~ test results, over & over again. A person needs to demonstrate that their mini-mental score has improved whilst on trial for the drug, ARICEPT. PBS then claim they never received the general practitioner's letter authorizing indefinite ARICEPT prescriptions. Only the authorized ARICEPT prescription local doctor, can request a repeat of ARICEPT through PBS. The general practitioner chooses not to be the authorized on-going prescribing doctor, so that the general practitioner will not be the on-going Aricept prescribing doctor, but PBS does not like the local doctor to prescribe Aricept. PBS wants a copy of the general practitioner's letter which ~~has~~ was sent to the local doctor but then PBS says it does not & has not received this letter from the local doctor. As so it goes on, it is enough to drive a Carer crazy. We have to go through bureaucratic hoops and still remain sane enough to maintain our on-going caring role. It's a big ask.

I have lost count of how many mini-mental tests my mother has had to sit through. In desperation I wrote to (faxed)

Ms. Nicola Rossen MP, Minister of Health & Ageing on the 4th June 2008 and again 12th June 2008, stating on 4th June, 2008, "If a patient does not receive the medication (Aricept), when they require it, the Alzheimer can take hold and the patient can deteriorate. If the patient deteriorates to the point that they require high level care, then the government instead of pay \$154.47 a month ^{for ARICEPT medication}, will pay \approx \$400 a day for (high-level) full-time care (in an aged care facility).

On the 12 June, 2008 I wrote to the Minister, "I wonder, just how many people, just give up trying to obtain ARICEPT."

From my experience Carers are forced by the bureaucracies to go round and round in circles. Carers need support and help from the bureaucracies to help us in our Caring Role.

Strategies to assist Carers to access choices would be to make Respite more affordable, so Carers can take breaks to reduce their stress levels.

The City of Whitehorse, (COW) is one of the few Councils, who will not contribute in ~~to~~ assisting my mother, because my mother is on a Federally Funded CAPS package.

I do not understand why they have this demarcation.

The COW would NOT CONTRIBUTE towards the installation of safety rails in my mother's home.

They will NOT PROVIDE my mother with meals on wheels.

As far as I understand the COW does not subsidize the Federal Government for my mother's CAPS package.

I would like to have the choice to go and study, when my mother goes to her socialising Alzheimers group, but the C.O.W. will not allow the Eastern Volunteers to drive my mother to and from the group, because she is on an CAPS (Federal) package. This would give me a break.

Advertisements by the Government, state what a diverse cultural group Australia has. How nice! It would be helpful if cultural specific groups were set up for our Aged Citizens. Many ethnic female stayed at home bringing up their families and never learnt to speak English. The system does not recognise this fact because there are inadequate places available to house ethnic specific Aged Care as well as Respite, the demand well exceeds the Supply.

I would like to Thank the Committee for reading my submission to the Inquiry for Better Support for Carers. I sincerely pray that your recommendations will be implemented.

I would love to receive a copy of your completed report and recommendations.

Yours Sincerely,

I would like to add that the help and support I receive from Careers Vic Australia is invaluable. It would be great if both PBS and Onelink could become more user friendly and supportive and practical.

Also knowledge of the Victorian Companion Card, is very much by word of mouth. Carers need to be better informed about its availability.

Thank-you once again.