

Committee Secretary
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family,
Community, Housing and Youth
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

ACC 17/7/68

Submission No. 855
(Inq into better support for carers)

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 submitting to the Inquiry because...

I am a carer for 2 daughters receiving help from the Mental Health System

I have a responsibility to my daughters to participate in improving support for Carers and in turn for them....and other Carers and those suffering from a mental illness.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my opinions to Parliament via this Committee.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

1. The role and contribution of carers in society

As a carer, I feel that my role is...

To do my utmost to assist my daughters to achieve their potential as individuals and as members of our community.

Our society is based on the concept of community health care, education and provisions for employment...in the hope that everyone has a reasonable quality of life.

I do not expect the Government to take on all the responsibility, but I do expect that our society will help Carers to care for people who need help to cope with their handicap.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

2. The barriers to social and economic participation for carers

As a carer, I face the following problems ...

It is very difficult for me to be employed because my commitment to my job would mean that I would not be able to assist my daughters at the times when they are experiencing difficult stresses and situations.

A feature of mental illness is the unpredictable timing and escalation of stress. A delay of hours or even minutes can sometimes be disastrous. I can leave the supermarket or a social activity or even a volunteer activity. However I cannot just ignore duties of paid work to tend to them.

I also assist them to meet medical/counselling/psychiatric appointments, and other domestic matters. – be it organising and filling in forms, driving them around, making phonecalls etc

Stressful situations, and lack of routine would make it difficult for me to alert and ready for work each day.

If I can't promise 100% commitment to a paid job, it's not fair to the employer. I am trying to find a job that will be on a casual/part-time basis, within the mental health sector that will understand my needs (and appreciate that my personal experience will be an asset)

More information is attached on a separate sheet

3. The practical measures required to better support carers

As a carer, I need help with ...

a. Occasional professional counselling to work out how best to cope with my situation.

b. Support from other Carers – via support groups and courses.

c. Financial support for me and my daughters.

d. Occasional respite.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

4. Strategies to assist carers to access opportunities and choices

I think the Government can better help carers by ...

a government agency allowing Carers to have a personal interview to discuss the situation comprehensively and together ascertain what the government and the carer can each do, and what the carer needs.

Forms from Centrelink do not allow for unusual situations such as more than one child needing help, a child living interstate but coming home for respite with mum, the unstructured timing of their needs.

The array of pamphlets and organisations is a maze. A carer does not know where to start.

As soon as a family member is thought to have a mental illness, the prospective carer should be able to discuss the situation with a socialworker (free of charge) to help the carer start off on the path to accessing help – medical, counselling, financial. If a caseworker were assigned from the start, the carer would be more competent and over time require less help from government. It would prevent subsequent problems, and facilitate people re-joining society.

Prevention is desirable, but otherwise “a stitch in time, saves nine”

More information is attached on a separate sheet

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.

Yours sincerely

Signature

MS WILMA

Date

4th July 2008

Contact Telephone Number