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House Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth

Noel

## Inquiry into better support for Carers

### Submission by Noel

I am Fifty Four Years old I am just a Carer, that is my job, that is my life. I am the primary carer of six people with different types of disabilities, the disabilities I deal with ASD- Autism- Intellectual Impairment -Fetal Alcohol Syndrome- Developmental Delay Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Psychiatric Disorders. My job description well apart from being a partner, parent, support worker, advocate, transport coordinator, financial adviser, housekeeper chief cook, domestic services officer, in fact I do whatever it takes for my family to survive.

I am overweight, suffer from sleep apnea blood pressure stomach ulcer, bad kidneys, enlarged liver, depression, arthritis in the knees, ankles, elbow and wrists been waiting years for dental work. My back was injured in an accident at work twenty or so years ago. Unfortunately every body needs come before mine but in all fairness that is my choice. Schooldays up early get Sean age eleven Caitlyn age ten up for breakfast ready for school leave home 7.45am to travel children 45kms one way return home approx 9.30am housework laundry cooking cleaning outside work vehicle maintenance etc. 2pm leave home to pickup Sean and Caitlyn from School return home average total travel per day 180kms travel time 3hours.

Fuel cost and rising Interest rates are now eroding the fabric that keeps this family together. We need new supports, ideas, and networks that don't forget about us, give us a voice. I feel I am undervalued as a person, not recognized for the Bloody Marvelous Job that I do. I am one of many doing it really tough.

Australia should look after the Australian Battler first. Regardless of the state of the rest of the world. This should be our birthright for every single Australian Citizen living in this great country.

### **The role and contribution of Carers in society and how this could be recognized;**

.Carers is in general undervalued fulltime support workers who give at least 150% seven days a week we give our hearts and energy freely but we find time and time again our hearts are broken, and our spirits are dampened. We save our government and the community in excess of 30 Billion Dollars a year. We are paid a pittance for what we do. We are generally unrecognized, unsupported in all areas including physical, financial, emotional the list goes on. We are our charges first line of protection we are their

advocates we know what their needs are and how to best address most given situations that arise. We as Carers are paid at the same rate as aged pensioners, without the intention of upsetting anyone aged pensioners I believe they are far better off than most Carers they either own their homes, get rent assistance. Whereas we have to budget for things like transport fuel and pay for just about everything that people all take for granted. Hospital, Dental, Fuel, extra travel schooling training In rural areas where in many cases supports and services are non-existent and we can't even access public transport. Where concessions apply for aged pensioners in many cases we are excluded as we are not recognized by the community and we are not entitled to the concession even though we have pension cards. Carers are the short-term quick fix sure, but with next to no support, in a short period of time everybody will be looking for ways to fix broken Carers. Carers could and should be recognized financially, as we are poorly paid (in my case I gave up a good career to care for my family as there was no other option) for what we do, our needs are great, varied, my needs may not be the same needs as other Carers, but all our needs should be addressed emotional, physical, medical, dental, respite.

**The barriers to social and economical participation for Carers, with the focus on helping and/retain employment.** The barriers for me I have no close friends; my family is somewhat isolated both by our location remoteness fuel, interest on mortgage, GST, spiraling cost of living, council rates. The moneys we receive just are not enough it creates stress emotionally and financially. There is no way I could find or retain employment as I care for Six people with disabilities I have no time, for social and community outings to be quite truthful I am just too tied to be bothered these days, unfortunately for me I feel the job I am doing now is the most important job I can do and I think I will be doing this till the day I die or I step away.

**Practical measures required to better support carers, including key priorities;**

These are priorities as I see them. Give Carers recognition! Pay a Pension that truly values reflex and shows that the government and community they are appreciated the sacrifices they make each and every day. I would like to be able to afford something for me, new clothes, a meal out, a treat, a holiday break, not to have to worry about issues at home, not to feel guilty about what I spend on me.

Carers with mortgages are particularly vulnerable. My suggestion would be to pay via Centrelink mortgage assistance paid at the same rate as rent assistance is paid to low income families.

Carer's families are not generally rental property materials. To live we need a buffer zone of sorts, people just don't want people with disabilities living too close. They do not understand, nor do they want to. Not to rent excuses, are quick to come, unless you except slum type living. Vermin infested, excessive rent, it goes on and on. Therefore we are forced to look at and take on mortgage debt.

Give supports by increasing funding in respite, counseling, and advocacy; improve access to social workers etc.

When Carers get sick or are unwell we still have to keep going. Waiting List for surgery etc. no-one take this into account we still have to persevere day after day, this adds more complications to the illness, desperation depression and isolation are then added to the mix. Not the things I would wish on anyone.

**Strategies to assist Carers access the same range of opportunities as the wider community,  
Including increasing the capacity for Carers to make choices within their caring roles,**

Increase Carers Pensions, Look into Mortgage Assistance,  
Protection via insurance rebates in the realm of Life- Mortgage -Vehicle – Property.

Even if this was just the GST component, it would be a start. Open up other avenues that Carers can use, increase available respite, access real supports. Prioritize waiting lists for Hospital, Optical, and Dental Services. Putting in place band aid measures.

\$1000 per year simply isn't real, sure it may pay a bill or two, but that is all.

To recognize and meet the cost of living in relationship to our needs, our costs, and the needs are at present well and truly not being met or appreciated by the government and the community. These things would enhance our lives; make us better able to keep on being our family's strength that we as Carers like to think we are. I realize these are big asks, you really don't know me, but if you got to know of Carers and their plights, their struggle to just survive on a day to day basis. You may find it to be a humbling experience or an exercise in humanities being more able to understand our plight and therefore respond effectively.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity make this submission and share  
My thoughts to you on this matter.

NOEL