

A.O.C. 1/7/08

Submission No. 359
(Inq into better support for carers)

24/6/08

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth
PO Box 6021
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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 feel that my role is not appropriately supported by the Government in terms of the present and long term needs that my son and daughter requires. I contribute to Australian society by working full time and paying taxes and feel it is only fair that parents as carers and raising two children with disabilities that I should be more appropriately supported with funding that is better distributed to those who need it most.

I face the following problems the most pressing of which is being able to access long term full time care for my son over the next 5-10 years in appropriately supported group home accommodation.

At present I am not able to participate in many aspects of a social life as my son has Down Syndrome and Autism and my daughter has Asperger's Syndrome which affects my ability to be able to take them out where there are large crowds, noise etc. My son also has behavior issues which also restricts our family outings.

As I am now into my late forties I worry about struggling financially having to support both my son and my daughter well into my retirement years. I am also concerned that my daughter with Asperger's may struggle to live independently as well, and not be able to work fulltime due the anxiety she experiences as part of having Asperger's.

I worry about my future as I have been a carer for the past 15 years and it has taken its toll on my health having suffered both anxiety and depression and exhaustion as result of my situation and the demands on me.

The things that stress me most about being a carer is the worry of the long term placement of my son in an appropriate care facility. Also, once my son reaches 18 years of age I will lose the present few hours of respite care and will only be eligible for some, if any respite service at all. In the next few years when my son turns 18 and leaves school it appears that I may have to give up full time work as at present the availability of services for him in our area will only be from 9:30am-2:30pm three days a week.

I need help with increased respite options and opportunities for long term care for my son into adulthood.

I need to have clear and committed ongoing support to do this from the appropriate government agencies.

I think the government can better help carers through increasing the payment made to carers and removing all means testing of these allowances.

I also feel it is critical that the government address immediately the long term support needs of families for their adult children with disabilities.

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
Mary-Jane