

The Secretary,  
 Inquiry into Better Support for Carers,  
 Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing & Youth,  
 House of Representatives  
 Parliament House  
 Canberra ACT 2600.

1-7-08

AOC 16/7/08

Submission No. 828  
 (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 writing on behalf of the Schizophrenia Fellowship, Sunshine Coast Branch and the many carers this involves. Also as a facilitator for Caloundra ARAFMI group, and the fact that my own son developed Schizophrenia whilst teaching nearly twenty years ago, I have had extensive involvement and empathy with carers.

Our family member often requires 24/7 vigilance making sure they receive appropriate medication and are safe! They need constant supervision and encouragement to make sure they even remember to eat, shower, change their clothes and practice hygiene. Because there is no where near enough professional care available we have to learn how to be their advocates, a job on its own; we have to negotiate with Government agencies for their best support, we have to keep abreast of any new projects for their well being and recovery, and indeed fight their battles.

There is also the financial drain, with extra & unexpected demands on finances. This is accompanied by the feelings of trauma & guilt if one doesn't put in. If a carer has some employment there is always the stress and anxiety while at work, consumed by guilt of not being available

if something is going wrong. We constantly cut our working hours when possible, resulting in less income, and often annoy employers who mostly have little understanding of mental illness.

I am constantly exhausted trying to be available to the needs of my other six children, to combat their feelings of resentment that their brother gets all the attention.

There is no doubt that Mental Illness has cost me my marriage, it ruins relationships with family members and friends because a carer has little left to give.

I was ecstatic to receive the recent Carers Bonus because I could get my son's car repaired, which means he can have a little independence, and I am not having to be his only means of transport if he is feeling a little more well.

The Schizophrenic F/Ship's role is to develop community awareness as to what help there is available for carers and their consumers as it is not well advertised.

We believe that your Government needs to offer more practical support to Carers by retaining and increasing benefits which should be linked to the C.P.I. This would help me to improve my quality of life a little, imagine if I could pay someone to do my ironing sometimes!

Thanking you for taking my views into consideration as part of the Committee's Inquiry I look forward to reviewing the recommendations you make in order to improve support for carers.

Yours sincerely  
Julian  
Pres. S/coast Branch of Schizophrenic Fellowship.