

10/6/08

Secretary,
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers,
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth,

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 care for my husband, who had a stroke last year. Before that time, he was fit and well, and able to do most things.

I previously cared for my frail aged mother for ten years, but I did not receive a Carer Pension or Allowance during all that time.

My husband and I are Age Pensioners, and I am now in receipt of the Carers Allowance.

My prime objective as a Carer is to assist my husband to better cope with day to day necessities, habits, movement and the general activities of an ageing life.

Secondarily, my aim is to keep him out of an aged care facility as long as I can. This latter aim is of course highly cost effective for Government, considering the many thousands of similar cases around Australia.

There are, of course, additional costs for me, which are taken from our very meagre Age Pension and Allowance, but the costs to me in energy and emotion are incalculable.

Since the stroke, my husband is no longer able to drive, so this is now his Carer's responsibility (i.e. me).

I have always enjoyed contributing to our community in various volunteering roles, but these are now curtailed for me because of lack of time.

My husband is no longer able to assist in the many jobs around our home. It is now necessary to pay a handyman for the many tasks which he was able to do until only a year ago. The going rate for a casual handyman is currently \$20 - \$30 per hour.

A major task like concreting or painting means the expense of a tradesman, so these projects never occur because of the cost.

Although we do belong to a Private Medical Benefits scheme, there have been a lot of out-of-pocket medical expenses to be paid by us with regard to his ongoing disability. I sometimes wonder how much longer we will be able to afford over \$50 per week for this insurance.

Initially we had Blue Care assist with his showering, but I have to do that now, as the cost of \$5 per time added up to more than we could comfortably afford.

We have really appreciated the Carer Bonus and Age Pension Bonus provided by the previous Government. We now understand that there is no certainty that the Carer Bonus will be paid regularly after this year. It would make our lives far more difficult if these payments were curtailed in the future.

We appreciate that the Bonus has always come in a lump sum, rather than an increase in the fortnightly payment, as has been suggested by some in bureaucracy.

We ask that the Carer Bonus be maintained as a matter of necessity, and we would much prefer to have the Bonus paid as a lump sum annually.

We would also really appreciate an increase in the small Carer Allowance paid to me, because rising costs in the necessities of day to day living are swallowing up the income we have from the Pension and Allowance, making it impossible to use the Carer Allowance for the purpose for which it was intended.

I hope you will take this submission seriously because it is very difficult for most Carers to maintain a reasonable standard of living whilst paying for the added costs that ill health demands.

Sincerely,

Marilyn