

REC 28/7/08

3 July 2008

Submission No. 1060

(Inq into better support for carers)

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

Dear Secretary  
I wish to make a submission to your inquiry into Better Support for Carers.

I believe my submission addresses, and is relevant to, most of the terms of reference.

Firstly, it must be said that it is recognised across our society that carers contribute in a major way to the wealth of the nation through assuming responsibility for those who can no longer care for themselves. If carers did not take on that role, the government would have to do so at a substantial cost to the taxpayer.

I have recently retired (a little prematurely) to care for my mother fulltime. She has advanced dementia. In the past 2 years, following my father's death, I was assisted by Goodwin Outreach till my retirement & 'the Cottage' at Deakin. I generally found the arrangement with Goodwin to be unsatisfactory for 2 reasons. The first was the procession of carers who came to help Mum - she became very confused & retreated into herself. The second issue I had with Goodwin was their administration which was appalling.

I ceased their involvement in February (when I retired).  
 However, the experience with 'the Cottage' is completely different. The concept of a 'normal' house environment instead of an institution is wonderful. The carers are amazing & the administration is very professional.

\* I consider this concept to be a great model for respite care for those people who have dementia (AND their carers, of course)

### Terms of Reference.

#### Recognition of carers.

Most carers (not in the workforce as carers) are caring for loved ones. As it is very important that their role in society is recognised. Given the <sup>huge</sup> saving their contribution is making to the taxpayer, I consider the following practical measures should be implemented.

- (a) increase in respite days per year from 63 to 100
- (b) rebate or subsidy on aids, such as incontinence aids, vitamin supplements, <sup>appetite enhancers,</sup> etc.
- (c) increase in assistance to respite facilities to provide additional services.

#### Barriers to carers' participation

The most significant barriers to carers' participation are restrictions on time to undertake employment, study etc. This could be addressed by access to (availability of) additional respite care. Employers, too, need to come into the 21st century by allowing employees to work from home & allowing more flexible working arrangements.

#### Practical measures.

There are several practical measures that must be put in place to ensure both carers &

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the people for whom they care are provided with adequate support.

They are

- 1) Provide sufficient places, particularly in 'The Cottage' model so that carers can feel confident their loved one is well looked after.
- 2) Provide a good career path for those employed in the caring industry, including educational standards & most of all, a reasonable remuneration for their skills. It is absolutely ridiculous that carers are paid less than cleaners to take care of my mother. It is not fair to depend on ~~some~~ (and exploit) someone's dedication to a job!! It is imperative that we have a well-educated & well-paid workforce in the caring industry.
- 3) Provide a subsidy/rebate for aids to assist in caring for our loved ones.

THIS IS  
CRITICAL

Thank you for taking my views into consideration. I look forward to reviewing any recommendations you make.

Yours sincerely

KATHLEEN