

17th June, 2008

Helen

Secretary
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth
P.O. 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 care for my husband who has an acquired brain injury due to a work accident 18 years ago. He has continued to work full time but his choice of employment is very limited. He has seizures every day and most people would not employ him in his trade as a carpenter. He has been extremely fortunate that one man has employed him and treats him no different from his other employees.

My contribution to society is that I must drive him where ever he needs to go, ensure he takes his medications, travel with him to specialist appointments. I also visit 2 other people in the community who do not have family close by and who are aged. I attend to their shopping, medical appointments and social activities. My father also needs assistance in his daily life as he is aged and lives on an isolated cattle property 1 ½ hours from me. I must travel each week to ensure he food etc., He does not get a pension – his choice.

I feel my contribution should be recognized by being able to claim for fuel when I do volunteer work. As I do the visiting 3 x weekly it does become expensive to run a car. I also work full time with families who care for people with a disability.

Caring for my husband and older community members affects my life greatly. I must keep time free each week to visit and be on call 24 hrs a day to assist them if needed. Financially I am OK as I do work full time. The thing I lose is time to do the things I may like to do for myself. Holidays and weekends free as non existent.

The practical measures that would make life much easier not only for me but for others as well is transport. I live in Roma and most people have to either travel to Toowoomba or Brisbane for any specialist treatment / appointments. Brisbane is 7 hours away but at least you can get a plane there if you can afford the fares.. Toowoomba (4 hours away) is where most people go and there is no transport other than a coach. Most older people or those with a disability find it impossible to actually get on the coach. The steps are too high and they find sitting for longer periods very hard on their health. The coach will only stop to pick up passengers and not when people need to use a toilet. The facilities on the bus are impossible for people to use as

they are very small and the movement of the bus means older people would fall over if they tried to walk around a bus. Roma needs a bus or similar to get people to Toowoomba for medical appointments. Every time my husband, one of the 2 older people I care for in the community or my aged father has to go away then I have to take them. This necessitates me taking time off work and having to drive for up to 16 hours straight which is dangerous. I have no option as I cannot leave work for any more than a day at a time. I usually do the Brisbane trip each month. It is a very real concern for me and a great struggle to do so. I also am not getting any younger.

The other concern is that the cost of transporting people to medical appointments is huge and the little bit of money given out for the PPS travel subsidy is an insult. The cost of staying in a motel overnight is much more than the rebate so we do not stay but drive home instead. City people do not have this cost so why should we? It is not fair to those people requiring medical support.

Any support we could get in this area would be ideal.

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

Regards,
Helen