

30th June, 2008

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Submission No. 945
(Inq into better support for carers)

Committee Secretary
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family
PO Box 6021
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 am submitting to the Inquiry because Family Based Carers are the forgotten people in the services provided to Aged and Disabled People still living in the Community. Most Aged and Disabled People prefer to remain in their own homes, and without the support of their carers, they are unable to maintain independent living.

1. The role and contribution of carers in society.

As a carer, I feel that my role is ...

to keep my 84 year old World War II veteran husband living at home. He does not fit into any of the conventional aged care services because of his intellectual ability and professional background: exposure to being organized into a structure, being "told what to do", like playing bingo, sitting around drinking cups of tea, etc. bores him to sobs. He needs mental stimulation, a no routine day - being able to go out when he feels like it (and on the spur of the moment) and to wherever he wants to go. He likes to have input to the meals we have and helps with chopping up the vegetables and also likes doing jobs around the house, like cleaning our shoes and emptying the kitchen tidy. He is a freemason and goes to his own Lodge each month as well as visits to other surrounding lodges nearby. As he cannot drive at night, I am also his chauffeur. The list goes on so far as my roles is concerned.

2. The barriers to social and economic participation for carers

As a carer, I face the following problems ...

I do not have a social life. Being able to keep up with family and friends in other parts of Victoria and interstate is virtually impossible. My husband is extremely dependent on me emotionally and does not like me being out of the house. Being paid only \$50.00/week (carers' allowance) makes having breaks away from home virtually impossible (I.E. having a holiday and me being looked after while I am away). My spousal pension barely covers my living costs at home.

Family Based Carers deserve to be paid far more than the pension plus carers' allowance. When my husband dies, the income coming into this house will drop by \$976.00/fortnight (approx) - if I am to have any quality of life when he finally goes and buy a house of my own, I will need to return to the workforce to be able to do so.

3. The practical measures required to better support carers

As a carer, I need help with ...

continuing to care for my husband at home and having enough relaxation in my own right. Being able to maintain hobbies and interests outside the home is also an important one. When my husband does eventually pass on, help in re-establishing life on my own would be useful.

4. Strategies to assist carers to access opportunities and choices

I think the Government can better help carers by ...

adequately remunerating Family Based Carers for the wonderful work they do in keeping their carees at home. The work which Family Based Carers do in keeping their loved ones at home saves the community millions of dollars each year - why not use some of that money to remunerate what is done.

Also, when carees eventually move on, either into care or on to higher life, for those of us who will need to update our skills in order to return to the workforce, financial help to retrain or upgrade skills would also be useful.

Why are carers in residential aged care and disabled facilities and those working for local councils and private providers in the community paid so much more than those carers working in the home? Why do they receive superannuation and work cover and we do not?

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



Jenny

(Mrs)

30 June, 2008