

Sent: Thursday, 3 July 2008 12:05 PM
To: Committee, FCHY (REPS)
Subject: Submission for Better Support for Carers

Doc 2817/08

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. My name is Helen

Currently I am away studying and will be back there 14th July, 2008. My role as a carer is to care full time for my 94 year old frail mother with multiple health problems which embarrass her and make her reluctant to go into respite care. I am also support person for an aunt with severe mental health issues, who lives in an independent living unit about 30 minutes from home. She needs assistance with shopping and taking to appointments, and daily emotional support - sometimes two or three times daily - from 30-60 minutes at a time. I also provide transport for medical appointments to an 85 year old resident in a hostel with memory loss. She has no one in Brisbane able to take her to appointments and act as liaison person with her Care Manager for multiple medical issues. I contribute to society by keeping my mother out of long term care. I also act as a Justice of the Peace from home, and am studying for a Master of Ministry to better help older adults, both now and in the future. My caring role affects my life by always needing to be present for my mother, 24/7. I am never off duty, except for a yearly two week winter school, when I arrange for a family member to come and stay with my mother. I have no relatives in Brisbane who are able to carry out this task, and this year paid for a sister to come in from Vanuatu to be with my mother. I tried to organize respite care, but it was not available at the times I needed. I find it difficult financially because as a full time carer I am earning considerably less than I did as a part time registered nurse. I am paying for my studies (around \$3,500 per year for four years), and arrange care for my mother when I am studying. (\$800 for a return flight from Vanuatu this year) Initially, two years ago, when my mother was less frail, I wanted to work shorter hours, but there was no bending by my employer - I had to do the whole 8 hour shift. This meant, with travelling time, that I would be away from home 10 hours at a time. Neither could I take my mother to work (I worked in an aged care facility). My only choice was to resign and be a full time carer. The practical measures that would better support me are to somehow financially subsidise the extra expenses I incur. It would also be wonderful to have some shorter breaks during the year, rather than just a hectic two week study program, with my mother cared for in her own familiar surroundings. This would assist me to cope with my caring tasks with more equanimity, benefiting all who have contact with me. Thank you for taking my views into consideration. I look forward to reviewing the recommendations you make in order to improve support for carers.

Yours sincerely,

Helen