

A.O.C. 12/6/08

Committee Secretary
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers
House of Representatives 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 am submitting to the Inquiry because...

I am 63 years of age and my wife is 61 and we have been caring for our intellectually disabled son since his birth 29 years ago. Our health is failing and it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide the level of care required for our son that we used to be able to do 20 years ago. Our GP has said that we are also suffering from what is commonly referred to as "carer burnout".

More information is attached on a separate sheet

1. The role and contribution of carers in society

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

To provide loving care and attention to our son and provide a safe and happy home for him to live in. To ensure his health is maintained at a high level and attend to his welfare. We also ensure his life is a happy one no matter how hard he makes it for us. We attend to his personal hygiene and clothing as we think it is important that he should always be clean and look smart, and be nice to be near. We also feel it is our role to socialize him with the public by taking him out to restaurants once a week for a nice meal.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

2. The barriers to social and economic participation for carers

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

My employer is very reasonable with my carer leave obligations; however my wife was never able to participate in full time employment since his birth as she could not leave home until after 9.00am when he was in day placement and had to be home at 3.00pm when he came home from his day placement. School holidays, term breaks and during frequent periods of our son's illnesses meant staying at home full time for her.

We find we are excluded from invitations to family and friends celebrations because of: "we knew you could not come because you have to stay home to look after [redacted], when we really know they do not want our son there."

More information is attached on a separate sheet

3. The practical measures required to better support carers

As a carer, I need help with ...

More periods of out-of-home respite. We need to be able to have more weekends respite to attend those family celebrations and weekends away to "recharge the batteries". We believe that weekend respite has more "respite value" than midweek respite.

Longer periods of out-of-home respite. We also need to be able to take a reasonable holiday at least once a year to travel and do other things that people of retirement age do. Eg 4 week overseas holidays, or 4 weeks touring around our own country would be an absolute luxury. We can retire from work but we never retire from being a full time carer!

More information is attached on a separate sheet

4. Strategies to assist carers to access opportunities and choices

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

Providing more respite houses that our son can access in our area so he can still attend his day placement by his centre's bus.

Provide more housing for permanent placement in supported accommodation so we can transition our son, in a caring manner, from our home to his future home. We should not have to relinquish him when the time comes that we find it impossible to care for him any longer.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

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

Signature

Richard

Print your name

09-06-2008

Date