

A.O.C. 16/6/08

Submission No. 58  
(Inq into better support for carers)

Secretary  
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers  
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.

My role as a carer is to care for my husband, who has multiple chronic medical conditions.

This started with a severe heart attack 32 years ago in 1976. He is now 73 years of age. As well as his heart condition, (which has become more severe since a cardiac arrest, requiring an implanted cardiac defibrillator, plus a further heart attack and stent), he is blind in one eye, has peripheral neuropathy in both legs, a bad back, and a memory problem since his cardiac arrest in 1996. He has had many other medical problems in the last 32 years - including stomach ulcers, bowel polyps, kidney stones, trigeminal neuralgia, glaucoma, removal of gall bladder, appendix and prostate gland. He also has a memory problem since his cardiac arrest in 1996. He is taking multiple medications, and requires constant monitoring.

My caring role affects my life on a 24 hour basis - night and day I must be his memory, medical adviser, nurse (including night-nurse), car driver, shopper, cook, laundress, companion, friend, supervisor.

My caring role has affected my life significantly in many different areas.

One area is the affect on my career and earning capacity. As an experienced qualified operating theatre sister, with double certificates, I expected to progress with my career when I returned to work, in 1969, after our 2 children started school. After my husband's heart attack in 1976, I had to periodically resign from work to care full-time for my husband. There was no Government support for anyone in my position at that time. When he was well enough I had no problem finding employment again, because of my reputation and references, but I naturally had not progressed in my career. I studied and worked full time in 1982 to gain my Midwifery qualifications, but was forced to retire permanently (aged 53years) in 1993 to care for my husband full-time. As well as wishing to pursue my career, I needed to work to pay for school fees and support our son through university.

SO, one of my submissions would be that the Government should implement a scheme to adequately and substantially financially assist/support those younger carers to continue to pursue their careers or be able to continue to be gainfully employed, if they are suddenly put in the position of having to care full-time for a member of their family. The role of carer is thrust upon them, they have no choice in the matter. Their training and experience is lost to the community.

It is more urgent that these people receive Government assistance, than the Government paying "Baby bonuses" or "Paid maternity leave" for people who have chosen to alter their lifestyle by having a baby.

My second submission would be the opportunity to have suitable respite care available readily. Respite needs to be appropriate to the condition of the individual to be acceptable.

My third submission would be to have more financial support available to help cover the necessity of paying tradesmen to do what my husband previously was able to do, and to help cover the costs of travelling over a 100kms to Brisbane to attend the specialist appropriate for his condition.

The Carer Allowance of \$100.60 a fortnight does not cover these costs over a 12 month period.

I have not touched on the stress involved in caring for a family member with high needs on a 24hour basis. This affects all members of a family, and it is essential that the carer stays in good health...which is not always possible.

Financially and practically it is much better for the Government to have as many members of the public cared for at home, so more assistance would be appreciated.

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

Yours sincerely,

Margaret