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REC 28/7/08

Submission No. 1047

(Inq into better support for carers)

My experience as a carer

Until late 2007 I was full time carer for an elderly and very dear friend who had no family here being a survivor of the holocaust.

While it was a privilege to care for him in my home. It was also a necessity for him to know someone he trusted to act and speak for him after the trauma of the war time experiences left him with many fears.

I found the **loss of privacy** in the first instance and time to attend to my own needs was distressing.

As time went on and the illness progressed we had many Medical visits to travel to so more **loss of time, plus the cost of travel was an issue.**

The provision of a community bus was investigated, however that plus community transport with Red Cross was not often an option because of the distance or length of time required to attend the appointments did not fit in with regulations.

I would say here that in my case the patient was as considerate and grateful however it was necessary to spend most of my time either with or attending to his needs.

I did access community help when and where I could. The community nurses attended as the illness progressed.

I had the **bathroom renovated at my own cost** to allow for easy access in there.

I was assessed for 1 hour a fortnight to have the carpets vacuumed and bathroom cleaned. With the increased people traffic this was a great help. I was grateful for any help and volunteers from Hospice came for 2hrs a fortnight to either take my friend out in the beginning or sit with him at home. I did ask for more volunteers so that I could go shopping, my medical apt. etc..

Of course volunteers could not attend to the personal needs or give medication so that greatly limited the time I was able to be away from home.

So as 24hr medication became necessary I was seriously sleep deprived totally exhausted and often in tears.

What can be done to help carers keep their loved ones at home?

More High Care Respite in the home.

Many aged care patients have a real fear of going into a home.

My doctor had my friend admitted into a home for the last month of his life because I was mentally and physically exhausted. I spent many hours there with him, he had a fear of strangers and it was often necessary for me to speak for him.

Sharing a room with an incompatible person created unnecessary trauma.

Better facilities in Aged High Care respite.

I have elderly parents, who are needing – but not wanting outside help. I find that frustrating. However I am sure there are many more who are also too proud to ask for any assistance. So now I do as much as I can, spending time with them I know this will become more time consuming as the months pass by.

I am a pensioner, so going to paid employment is not an issue for me. My parents and have not applied for a carer allowance because they are “Looking after themselves”

I realise more constructive remarks would probably be helpful. I am just “Brain Dead” at this time.

Yours Sincerely
Janet