

Bathurst District Carers Voice

APC 30/7/08

June, 2008

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth  
Email: [fchy.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:fchy.reps@aph.gov.au)

Dear Secretary,

We 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. We are writing on behalf of Bathurst District Carers Voice (BDCV), a group dedicated to raising awareness of, and promoting, issues that affect carers; identifying gaps in services and entitlements; and initiating and complementing lobbying efforts in the Bathurst area.

Last month, we held the Disability Advocacy Forum in Bathurst which was attended by 60 local carers. A community consultation was conducted where participants were asked:

*What are your challenges as a carer?*

and

*What would you like to see changed?*

There were many issues identified that need to be addressed in this community. Some individual carers have/will be submitting their own letters to you. A sub-committee of BDCV have summarized and elaborated below on what we see are the main points affecting most carers in our area.

We contribute to Australian society by providing care to our family members and friends, saving the economy billions of dollars per year. In order to do this, we struggle physically, financially, socially and emotionally. Examples of these hardships include older carers coming to the end of their physical endurance in caring for their adult children; financial disadvantage due to the inability to work, plus the costs involved in caring for people with disability and no superannuation to look forward to; social isolation that comes from prejudice around disability and poverty; and the emotional strain of dealing with the above, with no hope for the future. In short, many carers feel exhausted, frustrated and segregated from mainstream society through no fault of their own. Add to this the lack of respite, now and possibly into the future, and fear for what will

happen when a carer is no longer able to care, it is little wonder that many carers succumb to feelings of hopelessness and depression.

In regional areas we are further disadvantaged due to a lack of services and government funding. There seems to be no on-going planning for the future and little provision for back-up if a carer becomes ill. Some carers in this community travel hundreds of kilometres out of the region to access overnight respite. Decisions are made that affect the lives of caring families without consultation. The increasing number of carers who feel the only way they can survive is to abandon their children is a tragic indictment on what seems to be an uncaring broader society.

We look to government to help carers continue to do what they do in a more supported and humane way. This could be done by providing respite houses that cater for a range of needs and situations; it is not too much to expect that Australian families who care for a loved one should have the opportunity for a break from time to time so that they can continue in their caring role without jeopardising their own health.

How a government supports its vulnerable is a measure of its compassion and values. There needs to be more awareness of the hardships carers face; policies must reflect a duty of care and a respect for the human condition; both for the sake of carers and those for whom they care.

We hope that the above will contribute to the many submissions you have received.

Sincerely,

*Bathurst District Carers Voice*

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