

Submission No. 1298

(Better support for carers)

ABC 9/1/09

**To: House Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth**

**An Age Pensioner can stay overseas indefinitely, subject to conditions after 6 months.**

**A Carer can stay overseas only 13 weeks, after which Carer Payment is stopped..**

**A disabled Husband (Previously a Disability Pensioner and now Age Pensioner) and his wife (Carer) want to go overseas for 6 months, the husband can stay for the full period. However after thirteen (13) weeks the wife must return to Australia, report to Centrelink of her arrival back in Australia to enable continuation of the Carer's Payment and Allowance. At the same time, she advises Centrelink she is leaving the next day to return overseas to her husband.**

**The unfairness of this situation is that one round trip airfare costs say \$1500.00. The husband pays \$1500.00, but the wife pays \$3000.00. Over a 26 week period, a wife must pay \$115.39 weekly from her Carer's Payment for air tickets. The husband pays \$57.70 a week. In the event the couple planned a 12 months vacation, the wife would need to purchase 4 round trip tickets against the husband's one !!**

**In addition, the husband is without care for the period the wife is away. This could be referred to as enforced respite.**

**What is the reason for a 13 week maximum stay overseas for a Carer if the recipient of Care, a spouse, can stay overseas for a longer period.? Some years ago, the maximum stay out of the Country was 6 months or 26 weeks. For what purpose is the Carer being penalized ? Particularly as the job of a Carer is a thankless one, often without any respite whatsoever**

**Legislation should be altered to allow a Carer to accompany her disabled husband/wife for any length of time the couple desire to remain overseas, but not indefinitely. This time period could be 6 months, in any one year, like before. I'm sure the number of Carers affected by this restriction is minimal. Carers are responsible people and unlikely to abuse the system.**

**This situation applies to my wife and I. I was previously on a Disability Pension before converting to Aged Pension at age 65. My wife is from the Philippines. Although she is an Australian citizen, all of her family resides in the Philippines. She likes to visit her relatives each year and we usually spend 3 months there. However, to get value from the airfare and to take advantage of the cheaper cost of**

**living, we prefer to stay away at least 4 months, 6 months at a maximum. I can go for 6 months, but my wife/Carer cannot. The restriction on my wife's time abroad forces me to restrict my time to 13 weeks, not a longer period to which I am entitled.**

**Might I suggest that this unreasonable situation for Carers be resolved.**

**Yours Sincerely,**

**Ken**