

6th June, 2008

Submission No. 140
(Inq into better support for carers)

A.O.C. 25/6/08

Secretary
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth
P.O. Box 6021
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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 the carer of my two daughters who have very severe disabilities. Candice is 21 years old and Michaela is 17 years old. Both were diagnosed in their first year with cerebral palsy and are in wheelchairs. Neither of the girls are able to talk or walk and require twenty-four hour supervision. Candice is totally dependant in every aspect of her life. Michaela is able to undertake some simple tasks and has a profound hearing impairment. Both of my daughters are in chronic renal failure and are often sick.

I find it difficult financially because my husband (my daughters' father) is employed full-time and often works long hours, away from home and I am not eligible for the carer payment. We are currently paying into medical insurance which is very expensive and does not cover modifications to wheelchairs, physiotherapy, communication devices and specialised equipment for people with disabilities.

The barriers I experience as a carer in finding and retaining employment are the lack of respite and emergency respite available in the Warwick area. It would be unfair to an employer for me to continually ask for time off to take care of my daughters when they become sick or need to be taken to a specialist appointment. I often feel socially isolated and very lonely because I am home alone caring for my family. I would very much benefit from going out to work both financially and for my own self esteem.

The practical measures that would better support me are more respite

facilities and emergency respite care. Also blocks of respite to allow carers to take a break from caring for one or two weeks at a time throughout the year. Because it is vital that carers retain good health to permit them to do the best they possibly can in their caring roles, subsidised medical insurance for carers and the people they care for would be of benefit to them.

Thank-you 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

Barbara