

A.O.C. 27/6/08

Submission No. 187

(Inq into better support for carers)

From: Martin

Sent: Tuesday, 17 June 2008 10:37 AM

To: Committee, Reps (REPS)

Subject: Inquiry into better support for carers

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.

As a carer I feel that role in caring for my mentally ill son is paramount to his ongoing treatment. Along with medication and a healthy lifestyle, he would not be as well and stable as he is without my full time care and attention to his needs.

The problems I face are the stigma attached to the diagnosis of mental illness and the long term prospects of care for him. Most people think that a carer is one who cares for a physically disabled person. Mental illness causes more lifelong disability than any other illness. As long as there is no stress in his life and he is stable on medication it looks to the outside person that things are alright and that the family is coping. Our family takes every day as it comes and copes on a day to day basis.

I need help with government agencies recognising that mental illness is a disability that cannot be seen but has a real impact on the carer and their families. One example is Centrelink. The form to claim for disability support pension is the same for every disability. I think that there should be a separate one for mental health problems and physical disabilities. My son may be able to feed himself but is not able to socially interact which is a major disadvantage to a 23 year old man. The form is vastly unfair to a person with non-physical disabilities when trying to gain the correct amount of points to claim DSP.

I feel that more money should be injected into the health system to employ more trained mental health nurses and psychiatrists. The waiting list to get an appointment is too long : these are acute cases that need help now.

I think the government can better help carers by taking these comments on board and consider the families who care for mentally ill people.

Thank you for taking my views into consideration as part of the committee's inquiry.

I look forward to reviewing any recommendations you make to improve life for carer's in Australia.

Yours sincerely

Dawn