



21st June, 2008.

Submission No. 508
(Inq into better support for carers)

A.O.C. 7/7/08

Committee Chair,
Better Support for Carers Parliamentary Enquiry,
House of Representatives Family & Community Committee,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA ACT 2600.

Dear Madam,

I write as a Primary Carer to my husband and submit the following points for consideration.

- The role and contribution of Carers in Australian society should be better recognised.
- The everyday rights of living that are extended to Australian citizens, are frequently denied to Carers.
- Our own health and safety is obviously not considered to be important. Apart from tips on how to lift loved ones there is little interest in how Carers manage in what is, after all, a Workplace.
- Carers need opportunities to access the choices that other citizens take for granted.
- Carers are entitled to be recognised as having valuable skills, as being people who are primarily patient, self sacrificing, strong and encouraging. Those who need care are not always able to affirm their Carer, but such affirmation is a key factor in the ongoing role of caring.
- Carers need to be assisted and included when providing information for their loved ones, especially with health professionals and Government agencies.
- Carers, because of their high level of involvement, know the needs and circumstances of the "patient" better than anyone else yet are not recognised as part of the health care team. Considerable difficulties arise from this gross neglect making the caring role more difficult by the ones who should understand and sustain us.
- Carers are usually forced to leave their employment. This is not recognised in any way: eg. Financially (suddenly the family becomes forever poor), emotionally (as one grieves for loss of lifestyle, social interaction and use of skills)
- Carers have little choice about continuing to care for their loved one. Self esteem plummets as you dwell on the endless routines and multiple difficulties that now compromise your life indefinitely. Carers also get anxious about how the cared person will manage should the Carer die or become chronically ill.

- Carers suffer high levels of anxiety. Carers receiving the Carers Payment/Allowance usually use this money to assist with equipment and expenses, and to pay for a little Respite Care. The Payment received is very welcome but Carers are still always out of pocket. Money is always scarce and lack of money increases anxiety.
- Should the caring role cease Carers struggle to re-enter the workforce.
- The attitude of the general public to the disabled and chronically ill is hard to deal with. Strong leadership is needed by Government to help alter people's shortsighted attitudes. Government has the opportunity to be a role model in changing attitudes.
- Carers become socially isolated. Carers miss out on so many social opportunities and work hard at not being resentful, angry or saddened. Carers keep the cared person animated and interested in things around them while they themselves suffer isolation of the hardest kind.
- The person needing support also often lacks recognition as a person in their own right.

I've cared for my husband for 21 years, he was only 47 when he became ill. It's impossible to explain to you the impact this has had, not only on us but on our children and wider family. Thankyou for holding this inquiry and I hope you at least consider my submission.

Yours faithfully,

Cheryl