

Doc 17/7/08

Submission No. 854
(Inq into better support for carers)

House of Representatives Family and Community Committee

- the role and contribution of carers in society and how this should be recognised;

To perform in the role of carer for some one with mental health issues is complex and ongoing, without let or rest.

It requires being a constant source of funding, an advocate, a cleaner, a chief cook and bottle washer, a laundry, an unpaid taxi, a mental health expert, a confidant and friend and a virtual psychic to even know what is out there and what's available.

All this is of course in a volunteer role, not because one wants to or is that way inclined just a role of a dice and coz there is no one else going to do it.

Most cares should probably be recognized through knight hood, however I am sure financial recognition or access to financial resources would be better appreciated. *One family lost the ability to afford car repayments and thus were forced to rely on a two seat ute to transport a family of four, imagine a family outing that requires five runs to transport a family of four from point a to point b, another five for the return trip. Guess what no family outings.*

- the barriers to social and economic participation for carers, with a particular focus on helping carers to find and/or retain employment;

The greatest barrier to social and economic participation is time, energy and the often sporadically unscheduled needs of the person in need of care. Further there is insufficient information dissemination leaving carers adrift in a very uncaring world.

The financial burden on those caring for someone with mental health issue is often overbearing as budgeting ability or impulse control, confidence with public transport vary week to week, day to day.

- A fortnightly payment may be spent in one day with *friends* who vanish as quickly as the funds.
- Food because the payment is spent
- Fines occurring during *episodes* with no knowledge or recourses to have them overturned.
- Furniture damaged or destroyed.
- Fuel, time, availability and transport to ferry person to shops, bank, doctors, therapy etc etc

Thus a carer has to provide two lots of funds, one for their much reduced life and one for the person for whom they care.

I wish you well in helping cares find and or retain employment. I'd like a job, one where I could leave any time or maybe not show up for at all, one where I

can still perform all my duties as carer and of course take home the average Australian income of \$1000/wk.

- the practical measures required to better support carers, including key priorities for action; and

One real and practical measure could be to give mental health patients free public transport.

I cannot recall the number of times people with a mental health problem have been caught for fair dodging when in their reality that is not the case at all, they would have paid if they had the money or if the ticket machine wasn't really just there to spy on you, or if having a ticket meant they could find you.

What begins as a simple excursion ends in charges of fair evasion, often assault public office & resist arrest, not to mention court costs, of course paid by the carer!

Another absolute necessity is beds, well trained staff and facilities nation wide so families have access and help is available for the duration it is needed, not the duration is can cope with providing.

Also families need to be listened to and part of the treatment process, treatment providers are often strangers and have no intimate knowledge of how the patient may know and manipulate the system to circumvent treatment. *The lack of this is the sole reason why Toby Tang Benson Garrett was able to be in Adelaide to be murdered on 31/12/07*

- strategies to assist carers to access the same range of opportunities and choices as the wider community, including strategies to increase the capacity for carers to make choices within their caring roles, transition into and out of caring, and effectively plan for the future.

As my son would say "lol" (laugh out loud) what a warm and feely concept.

I reside momentarily in Applecross WA, my wider community has two story dwellings, drive Jaguars and BMWs, holidays overseas, probably invest in real estate and stocks and bonds, do coffee with friends, play golf and go to day spas. One strategy would be a lump sum payment of about \$3000000:00 per carer, this would enable the same range and choices, and give cares the respect they deserve to make choices in their caring roles, it would also enable carers to transition into and out of caring by allowing employment of trained staff and of course allow carers to plan for the future when they are dead but the person they are caring for still has needs that must be met.

Realistically even if there is work, it is at the lowest end of the wage scale, chances of further education are prohibitive due to time factors and cost. Courses are not designed to be 100% online and are restricted to cities or a handful of courses available at remote centers.