

Submission No. 2

(Inq into better support for carers)

A.O.C. 28/5/08

Sent: Friday, 16 May 2008
To: Committee, FCHY (REPS)
Subject: Inquiry into Carer role

I have been my husband's carer for eleven years. We are both 66 y.o. He is brain damaged and physically impaired in that he lives in a wheelchair and requires mechanical assistance for all transfers.

1. CATEGORIES OF DISABILITY - e.g. low, high, extreme care, supervisory care, companionship care

The categorisation of "disability" should be carried out by experienced medical officers not just the family GP. I would suggest that the high numbers of "disabled" people in Australia would be significantly reduced.

People who provide high or extreme care to an individual have no life of their own as the person for whom they care are unable to be left alone, EVER. This results in social isolation for the carer who have to run their lives to fit in with any services temporarily provided to take over the caring role whilst the primary carer is absent (e.g. own medical appointments, shopping, haircut, etc.)

People who provide high or extreme care have to acquire nursing and physiotherapy skills in order to maintain the target's health status. However, the Centrelink payments do not reflect these skills.

2. CARER ILL HEALTH

Whilst carers are permitted 63 days respite per year if the carer become ill and is unable to expunge the caring role part of the 63 days must be used to avoid loss of benefits (to the carer). This is disgraceful, especially in the aged carer, as we need every one of those 63 days of respite in order to maintain our caring role.

3. AGED CARERS receive the Aged Pension and are, consequently, excluded from any bonuses awarded to those receiving the Carer Payment (but not the Carer Allowance). Centrelink urges women at 63.5 to change from the Carer to the Aged pension.

Aged carers usually live alone with their dependent. If my husband has an event that requires a full change of clothing and bedding there is no one available to attend to this THE AGED CARER HAS TO DO IT ALONE and this is very difficult when the dependent person is unable to move.

Therefore, aged carers have the disadvantages that affect all elder Australians as well as the ongoing drudgery and very heavy physical and emotional loads associated with caring for a completely dependent person.

4. UTILITY ALLOWANCES are gratefully accepted (thank you ALP) HOWEVER the gst often negates the regular utilities bills (Telstra, electricity). In addition, those of us who depend on LPG cylinders in a domestic situation do not receive pensioner rebates for this type of gas.

Thank you for considering my submission. Minister Macklin wrote about all these issues over the years so would be well aware of the issues cited.