

Submission No. 98

(Inq into better support for carers)

11 June 2008

A.G.C. 23/6/08

Secretary
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers
PO 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 Houth's Inquiry into Better Support for Carers.

My role as a carer is to look after my 34 year old son who suffers from a mental illness. I contribute to society by overseeing his needs, playing the role of advocate for him when dealing with professionals or other third parties, making applications and submissions for him in a variety of ways. In addition I work part-time as a teacher.

I think carers should be recognized by acknowledging the role they play and being grateful for the fact that they, apart from a small allowance, do this on a voluntary basis for the love of their child. Most carers spend about 80% of their time catering to the needs of the child with the disability and 20% of time to children who are not disadvantaged. Therefore my caring role means that I have to devote a disproportionate amount of time to supervising the sick child/adult.

Financially, it can be a burden when carers have to make up for the shortfalls for anyone who is trying to exist on a disability pension. Or alternatively, if they overdo their credit card, cannot pay bills, shop to excess or find that they have an emergency such as a trip to the dentist.

It has impacted on my employment to the extent that I am now only employed part-time. When he was first diagnosed, I was so concerned about his welfare that I had to take leave from work until things stabilised.

Practical measures that would better support me would be access to services for carers. Potentially, I think the biggest problem for carers is to find suitable accommodation for their loved ones. Housing is by far the weightiest issue for us. Currently there is a waiting list of 10 years on the Sunshine Coast and I have been told it is no better elsewhere.

So in conclusion – issues facing carers are:

- Housing
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- Better access to services
- Perhaps an increase in the allowance to the extent that it matches cost of living
- Establishment of medical facilities that have a broader canvas for the mentally ill – to take into account alternative remedies etc
- Subsidation of recovery programs for the mentally ill

I would appreciate any assistance you could render as these matters are of the utmost importance to us as carers.

Yours sincerely

Beverley