



rec 4/8/08
Submission No. 1147
(Inq into better support for carers)

Secretary,
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers,
Standing Committee on Family, Community,
Housing and Youth,
P.O. Box 6021,
House of Representatives,
Parliament House
CANBERRA . A.C.T. 2600

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.

Yours sincerely,

- MERLE

(m.b.)

I AM A "CARER".

I have been a carer for 47 years and foresee this role continuing for as long as there is need and my health allows.

All parents are carers, but when your child has a disability, the caring role increases many times and in many cases becomes life time.

Our daughter was born at a time in history when disability was perceived as "OUT OF SIGHT" and services for the disabled were non-existent.

"INSTITUTION" only fuelled our desire to give her love, life, family, home and an acceptance as a member of the community in which we lived.

It was the beginning of my commitment to help her and others like her.

I was a trained teacher and became involved in or helped to establish services that were needed. Over 43 years I have been involved in education, employment, training, respite, accommodation and support services. I recognised that not only the person with a disability needed help but also the carer. I am thankful for the support I received from my husband and family, for without that support, life would have been very different.

However, like so many other carers, we have experienced the stress, frustration, and the impact the caring role has on one's social, emotional, physical and family life.

I've experienced strength and weakness, hope and fear. The fear of the unknown of "WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I'M NO LONGER HERE?" Lately I have been asking "WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I'M NO LONGER ABLE?"

HEALTH PROBLEMS are escalating and are impacting on our lives. I am 69, my husband is 74. We are a lot slower and everyday tasks take many times longer to do. We yearn for peace and contentment. We're tired.

Coupled with this are premature ageing health problems of our daughter.

"HOW DO CARERS IN NEED OF CARE ALSO GIVE CARE?" - What will happen to our daughter as we go through the ageing process. WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

When we were in the workforce, we recognised the need to plan for retirement and in so doing also recognised the need to plan for our daughter's future. We attempted to face reality, identify future needs and the financial constraints that would impact.

Retirement for carers is very different than retirement for non-carers. There is no retirement from the caring role nor any recognition of the years served as a carer.

We are thankful to the Government for the financial assistance provided and

have identified that our needs in the near future will be in the field of "care".

COMMUNITY CARE FOLLOWED BY AGED CARE.
"COMMUNITY CARE WHICH ADDRESSES THE NEEDS OF THE AGED, AND THE DISABLED, AND THE CARERS WHO LIVE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY."

Many communities have many services. In most cases, "they don't need more services but BETTER SERVICES."

For years we have been saying - "SERVICES ADDRESSING NEEDS". What needs? -

Their needs or consumer needs?

The general population may ask, "What is all the fuss about? there are services to help." That is the perception, for the reality is quite different.

If the carer is "AWARE" of a service and has the strength to seek help - it is usually the start of an obstacle course.

These words may seem harsh, but they acknowledge the frustrations a carer endures in seeking service.

ELIGIBILITY, DIFFERENCE IN STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING GUIDELINES, STAFFING and particularly TRAINED STAFF are some of the hurdles which have to be overcome before service ^{or} can be delivered.

In most cases, carers need to make contact with more than one service

provider. Services are dis-jointed and in some cases not involved in net-working. CO-ORDINATION has to be done by the carer.

Aged carers are tired they lack the knowledge skills and support they need to assist them in their role. Many retreat into their homes and become "forgotten" and the person they are caring for is also "forgotten".

HOW MANY AGING CARERS ARE CARING FOR A LOVED ONE AND NO ONE KNOWS?
- WHAT HAPPENS IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO THE CARER?"

There are some services providing excellent service with professionalism and compassion and deserve recognition. I am grateful to those services. I wish to make special mention of a wonderful "scheme" which I was recently made aware of and am now utilizing for my daughter. ie.

C.A.S.S. - This scheme addresses the individual need by offering "CHOICE" along with quality and service.

As a carer in rural NTH. QLD, I have become aware through the scheme of new products available which can be purchased using the government subsidy. The staff are caring, helpful and knowledgeable. Contact can be made

on a 1300-number.

For the benefits to my daughter's life and the help this scheme has given to me, I am thankful to the Government.

The experiences I have related are some of the personal experiences I have encountered along with some of the frustrations other carers have shared with me.

I thank you for this opportunity and welcome any further involvement which may result in an improvement in the life of carers and in so doing improve the lives of those for whom they care.

Yours sincerely,