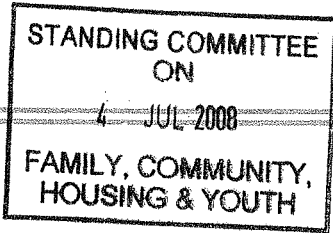


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Submission No. 1149
(Inq into better support for carers)



Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth
P.O. 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 Youth's Inquiry into 'Better' Support for Carers.

① My role is carer to a husband of forty years who has obsessive compulsive disorder, chronic depression and anxiety who has been suicidal on several occasions. Medication permits him to work full time as he is a workaholic.

First daughter's psychiatric episode began fourteen years ago as she developed obsessive compulsive disorder, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder - Currently 'on a disability pension' & hospitalized for 2 1/2 years.
Second daughter has obsessive compulsive disorder and chronic depression - gained honours in social

work degree - continually in and out of work as her illness is debilitating - she has been on medication for 10 years and currently going off it because her memory and ability to work is impaired related to the side effects of medication.

I also have obsessive compulsive disorder and take medication to help with my depression.

I have reduced my hours of work as a registered nurse in aged care because of my need to care for my family.

I am employed as a Carer Representative at Ryde Community Mental Health Centre and facilitate a support group for carers to help them navigate the system to gain help through my past experience and knowledge that I pass on.

I also work for Schizophrenia Fellowship of N.S.W by presenting with my daughter as consumer and carer to health professionals, other carers at conferences and to Rotary Community Forums to raise awareness and de-stigmatise mental illness.

My financial situation is struggling due to my reduced working hours and when Centrelink ceases my Carer Allowance abruptly whilst they review my situation. I have been without payment for two months and am concerned that I have missed the \$600 bonus I was relying on. What a convenient time for Centrelink to cease it at 5pm with

little explanation and understanding.

I suggest that Centrelink's admin staff be offered training in empathy by listening to stories by carers and consumers in mental health.

Centrelink forms for Carers Allowance are still not friendly. Carers have been rejected once & do not re-apply. I re-applied & was rejected three times in one year - I then attended three tribunals the following year finally gaining a meagre allowance. I fought this because of the principle if government offers this then it should be made available to such worthy recipients as carers who save governments billions.

I am presently fighting back after a recent rejection.

I am disappointed with funding cuts to Mental Health Centres resulting in fewer activities for consumers and staff cuts by not replacing sick/annual leave staff thus making workloads so extreme that mistakes are made with honouring home visits & medication supervision, for consumers.

I believe more money governments spend on community mental health centres the less need for acute centres.

Increased education for staff in psych. hospitals by carers & consumers to reduce stigma evident in health professionals. My daughter was six months

in acute care before staff bothered to speak to me. RN's could unlock doors & allow you to pass in & out without eye contact or verbal comment. My daughter & I use this example when we present to nurses.

Lack of communication between carers and health professionals has been most stressful.

Stress for a female consumer was being in a locked ward with violent & aggressive males - as they used foul abusive language & kicked in doors and walls - The fear my daughter experienced that she would be raped was extreme & these wards should be segregated.

Social life for me & my husband is almost non-existent due to our commitments to provide a living for our family including financial support.

Emotional support for each other is extremely important for our survival.

I am pleased with government supported funding to A. R. A. F. M. I providing education & social outings for carers but not at the expense of consumers who will miss out by funding cuts to mental health centres.

The closure of Rozelle - mistake - mistake - fever beds at Concord & access by public transport ??

5.

The result of closure at Gladesville hospital
++ problems in the Ryde area.

Please do not close acute services at Macquarie
Hospital ie close Parkview.

Cummins Unit at RNSH inadequate.

Please increase funding to HASI programmes ie
providing accommodation after discharge from
psychiatric hospitals.

Please take my views into consideration as part of
the Committee's inquiry.

I look forward to reviewing any recommendations
you make to improve life for carers in Australia.

JUDITH,