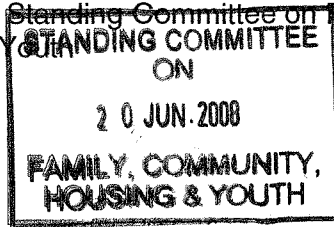


A.O.C. 30/6/08

Committee Secretary  
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family,  
Community, Housing and Youth  
PO Box 6021  
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.

I am submitting to the Inquiry because...

I am a fulltime carer for my 24yr old son who has an injured brain injury due to a hit & run car accident and I am very tired, lonely, depressed and poor and wish that there was more support & recognition for carers.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

1. The role and contribution of carers in society

As a carer, I feel that my role is...

firstly to assist my son in his recovery so that he can live his life to the fullest of his potential and help him gain more independence so he can live as normal a life as possible and contribute to society. secondly & unfortunately I feel that as a carer I save the government money.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

2. The barriers to social and economic participation for carers

As a carer, I face the following problems ...

Socially & economically I cannot participate in society because I am bound to the house due to my son's high demands, my psychological problems, lack of emotional & financial support and I have no life of my own.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

**3. The practical measures required to better support carers**

As a carer, I need help with ...

Centrelink processing should be less time consuming i.e. they should come to us so we don't have to attend endless appointments with child & wheelchair in tow. less waiting time on phones, less forms to fill in. More disabled parking. divide disabled parking i.e. wheelchair/non wheelchair.   
Counselling for carers over the phone. More money.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

**4. Strategies to assist carers to access opportunities and choices**

I think the Government can better help carers by ...

More community housing. More respite per year from Centrelink. More money. Telephone counselling that is immediate. free access to psychologists. one point of contact to access services. Also financial support for part-time carers who no longer work and are in transition.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

Thank you for taking 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.

Yours sincerely

Sandra.

Print your name

16th June 2008.

Date

Sandi

June 2008-06-16

Committee Secretary  
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family,  
Community, Housing and Youth  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

I have tried to keep this submission brief by following the 'Carers of Victoria' guidelines, but there is so much more that needs to be said. I have tears in my eyes as I write this because I am reminded once again how much I have lost, and how little I have. I struggle to survive on a daily basis, financially, emotionally, and every way you could imagine. I am terrified I am going to die because of the pressure I've been under since my son was hit...and who is going to care for him.

My role as a carer is to care for my son, so he can have the best quality of life he can. There is no recognition for that, in fact everyone we knew has left us including my partner of 12 years. I was told by hospitals, organizations, and family to put my son in care so I could continue to work and have a life.

Community houses were difficult to find, but after many months and lots of driving we found one. It was an hour from where we lived because there was nothing close to home so I could visit him. My son was isolated, and frightened. was in part-time care for three days a week for nine months.

At Easter 2006 he was raped by an overnight carer, and came home to live indefinitely. The carer pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 200 hours community service. A non-satisfactory result considering that my son could not walk at the time, and has the mentality of a ten year old.

I have not been in paid employment since. I have lost my friends, family, social life and my sense of self. I suffer from post-traumatic stress, high anxiety, depression, panic attacks, and I'm afraid to leave the house. I would like to resume my exercise program to improve my health, but even if I had the time I can't afford to go to a gym, or a yoga class, or swimming...much less have a massage. It has been a 24/7 job to make phone calls, fill out forms, and access as much as I can to give my son a life, but I am not caring for myself. There is no way in the world I could go back to work at this point of time. I can't even get to a doctor because every-time I try to do something for myself there will be another drama with that I have to deal with. Often the paid carers don't turn up,

or the agencies can't cover the shifts allocated by TAC. We can't access most organizations because my son is covered by TAC.

The help I require at this point of time is for 'Centrelink' to be easier for carers. I am told I have 64 days respite a year. I have recently had a total physical and emotional breakdown, to the point where I was suicidal. I did not want to put my son in care...after his rape that is understandable, and he didn't want to go either, but I had to choose between living and dying. I have used up 30 days of my respite and 'Centrelink' are telling me I have to go on a job-search allowance when I've used up my respite. More phone calls, more appointments, more forms. I would like to just focus on my health while I'm having 'time-out' and not have to worry about money. My carers allowance just covers my utilities. I live on cheese on toast, and my savings.

There should be more disabled parking, and that should be divided into 'wheelchair' parking...and 'others.' I want free access to psychologists as a family (mother) carer. At the moment the only people I can speak to immediately over the phone for counselling are the 'Road Trauma Support Team,' and they are fantastic, but if there was no-one there, there would be no-one.

I have Jose four days a week, and he may decide to come home tomorrow, or the next day. I am living in transition, and 'Centrelink' should be aware of that. I can't go from being a full-time carer to being a full-time worker.

The transition should be paid full-time carer to paid part-time carer. This would give us carers a little time to reflect, and sleep, and sleep some more, in-between caring. To work out what we can do within our limitations.

I am fifty years old. I didn't choose to be a carer. I had a great job, a great income, and choices as to how I wanted to see out my life. There are no choices in being a carer...unless you don't care for your child. I would like to move to the country and have chickens, and a garden, but I don't see how that is possible unless someone else cares for my son as well as I do, but they don't.

Perhaps the solution is to give 'paid' carers more money, so caring is more of a career than just in-between taxi driving or university degrees. And they certainly need much more training than they are given.

I do hope you can help support the unpaid carers and have better understanding that there are all kinds of carers. We are all thrust into it, but our needs are different and that should be acknowledged.

It is a beautiful day here in Melbourne and I should be walking my dog in the sun, but I am hopeful that my words might mean something to someone and make someone else's life a bit better.

Regards,

Sandi