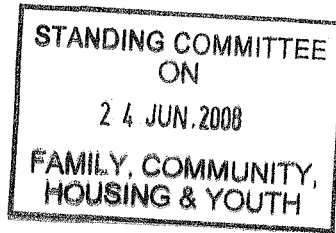


A.O.C. 2/7/06



16<sup>th</sup> June, 2008

The Secretary  
Inquiry into better support for Carers  
Standing Committee on family, Community, Housing and Youth  
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 Youth's Inquiry into better Support for Carers;

My role as a carer is to my husband who suffers from a heart condition and PTSD as a result of his war service in Vietnam. In my role as a carer, I am here for my husband when he can't sleep at night, when he suffers from panic attacks, to make sure he takes his medication, gets to his doctors appointments and to be here during the day if he manages to fall asleep so he will feel safe enough to get a little rest.

I contribute to society by doing all of this as it saves the government a lot of money not having him in and out of care when things get to much for him to cope with.

I think it should be recognized that in my role as a carer, it is not unusual for me to work in excess of 16 hours a day and am "on call" 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Public Holidays and weekends mean very little to me.

My role as a Carer affects my life by not being able to get a proper night's sleep or have a social life like most people living in this country take for granted, because of my husbands conditions. I would probably only leave my home a couple of days a week for no more than an hour at a time, usually just to get groceries.

I find it difficult financially because we were in our 40s' when my husband became sick and could not work anymore. We were not able to work to retirement age and retire with superannuation, which was always our intention. I also had to give up my job to care for my husband. So we not only lost his wage but mine as well. I was earning more per week 12 years ago, than I get a fortnight now.

We were on sickness benefits for several years before my husband got a pension, so any savings we had were used up many years ago to survive and raise our children. Now we live off the pension and hope that the money lasts the fortnight, but it doesn't anymore. We have not been in the financial position to have even a brief holiday since September, 2000.

I have tried several times to get a job, but it is not possible to retain employment when I am needed at home so much of the time.

In practicality I feel that the Carer Allowance should be closer to double what the present rate is, because it falls far short of reasonable payment for lost wages etc.

This support would at least bring my lifestyle financially closer to that of a low wage earner and possibly allow me to enjoy some of the basic things that I sadly miss out on now.

Thank you for taking my views into consideration as part of the Committee's Inquiry. I look forward to reviewing the recommendations you make in order to improve support for carers.

Yours sincerely

Margaret