

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

Submission No. 1183
(Inq into better support for carers)
Acc 1/8/08

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 the carer of a daughter who was diagnosed with schizophrenia at the age of 19 years. She is now 48 years of age. I have experienced the many phases of mental health care both in the private and public health systems over 30 years. The only real progress has been brought about through more active participation of carers and consumers, and more effective medications such as clozapine.

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...

To advocate on behalf of my daughter in all aspects of her care and as a member of a carer support group to inform carers about services available in the community. To be involved in committees as a carer representative and provide comment on various government strategies in the mental health area.

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 ...

I'm aware that the workplace is not a friendly place for people who care for a family member with a mental illness. There is little understanding of the fluctuating nature of chronic mental illness and the stress carers suffer. It is usual for a carer to hide the facts from co-workers, as the stigma related to mental illness is still quite common. Socially, a carer tends not to discuss the issue of mental illness in the family unless with close friends or in a carer support group. It is difficult for a carer and family members to socialize with people in their home as the behaviour of the person with a mental illness can be aggravated by the presence of visitors in the home. The carer is very restricted when living with the mentally ill person as even a telephone call, watching TV, or listening to the radio in the home can bring on paranoia.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

3. The practical measures required to better support carers

As a carer, I need help with ...

More outreach services that would assist my family member to manage better to live independently. As I'm almost 70 years old, I need to plan for my daughter's future care and financial support. I know services exist for this purpose (eg State Trustees), but from

discussion with other carers, I'm aware that there are problems associated with these services. Improving the support available to the mentally ill family member will lessen the stress and burden on the carer. Secure housing, outreach support and assistance with planning for the future of the person being cared for would be of most benefit to the carer.

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 ...

We have Carer Consultants, Mental Health Carer Support Workers, Carer Counselling, Carer Brokerage Funds, Carer Helplines, etc. All these services cannot provide more than short-term band-aid assistance. Proactive mental health services, outreach services, face to face support for carers, long term case management for people with a serious chronic mental illness and most importantly, secure, affordable housing with support.

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

Signature

Judith

Print your name

Judith

Date

3 July 2008
