

Submission No. 1201

(Inq into better support for carers)

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Sent: Monday, 14 July 2008 11:42 AM

To: Committee, FCHY (REPS)

Subject: Better Care for our Carers Inquiry

To Whom it may Concern:

I apologise for not meeting the deadline for submissions – the busy life of a carer! I would like to have my say though if it isn't too late and have one key suggestion which I believe fits into your terms of reference.

As a Carer I have given up my full-time employment – a career in Education where my annual gross salary 3 years ago was approx \$93,000 with superannuation package. Prior to my husband being diagnosed with Parkinsons Disease, he was a Head Teacher in TAFE NSW on an annual gross salary of approx \$78,000 with superannuation. He had to retire at the age of 55 (he is now 63), and I had to give up f/time employment at the age of 51. Because of this, our superannuation was not able to reach its full potential. Nor were our savings for retirement.

We are both now on pensions – Disability and Carers. The NSW minimum wage was recently announced as somewhere in the vicinity of \$520 per week (I am not sure of exact figures). **Surely the Carer should be receiving the minimum wage equivalent rather than a pension, with associated superannuation.** The alternative for the Government would be to be paying for my husband's care in a nursing home – a much more expensive option.

Having to now survive on a pension has taught me how impossible it is for anyone on a pension to survive! I am unable to leave my husband alone, and average 4-5 hours sleep each night. This adds to my stress. I continue to undertake some education consultancy work if it can be done from home but of course, for every dollar earned my pension is reduced. So, not only do I have the stress of trying to undertake employment to maintain some currency and to have some additional income, I have to report every cent I make, and suffer a reduced pension as a consequence.

I am also concerned that if anything does happen to my husband, eg if it becomes necessary to admit him to a nursing home (he has been assessed under ACAT as high level care) I then have to find f/time employment again having been out of the workforce for sometime as a Carer. While I would love to return to my previous career, I am fully aware that I have become somewhat deskilled, despite efforts to remain abreast of current research and technologies. I am also somewhat older (now 54) and am only too well aware that Government Departments (my past employer) consider this age past the use-by date with their constant restructures and downsizing.

I am sure there are many Carers in my position. Recognising the work that we do and compensating appropriately with accompanying superannuation would be the most effective way of supporting both the Carer and the Disabled and extending the time they can have in their home.

Regards

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