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Submission No. 971
(Inq into better support for carers)

4th July 2008

Secretary
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth

Dear Secretary

I wish to make this 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 Sole fulltime family Carer means that my essential priority is giving support and quality of life to an adult member of the community who would otherwise be deprived, vulnerable, abused and most likely unable to function in the community.

I am one of many Carers who provide full time care for a family member. This being so, I have a sincere and long-term interest in the welfare of the person I care for, a capacity for more patience, an intimate understanding of her, her disabilities, the family, and consistency in the standard of care she receives.

My care for my daughter's physical, mental and emotional needs is present 24hrs/7days/52weeks

I do not believe that any would freely choose to commit to the demanding, financially and personally limiting and poorly remunerated role of a fulltime Carer.

I also accommodate as best I can, the very important roles of support to an Ageing Parent, a Parent and an active Grandparent.

I have calculated that the hours of care I provide. I have subtracted available respite hours (94hrs per 90 days) and support hours (9 hrs per 7 days). This means that I care for 21.76 hrs per day over every 90 days which includes ALL Saturdays and Sundays.

On this basis, if a casual worker was paid say, \$17 per hour – **not including Penalty Rates, Public holidays or Superannuation,**

they would receive \$369.92 per day. Unless I am mistaken, it would seem they would have to be paid \$2589.44 (per week) I appreciate the concessions that Carers currently receive and the tax-free threshold but there is still a huge gap in our standard of living and remuneration that is impossible for Sole Carers such as myself to improve, especially as we age.

I contribute to society by;

- Morally - validating that we live in a Country that declares its humanitarian, civilised, educated and enlightened values and practices and regard for its citizens
- I maintain familial relationships not just for the benefit of the person I care for but also the benefit of extended members. The family is the basic and important social structure in any Society.
- Exposing the community to a better understanding and acceptance of people who have a disability
- Showing the person that I care for and others who have a disability or are disadvantaged to have feelings of self-worth and dignity
- I continue to pay tax as I expend my Carer Payment and Allowance

I think my contribution should be recognised by;

- A Superannuation allowance for the financial future of Carers
- Remuneration that would acknowledge and dignify the hours, the sacrifices and the limitations of fulltime family Carers and more suitably reflect their essential role and value to Society
- Education and Awareness that any of us may need to be cared for - whether by ageing, disease, birth or accident and the kind and quality of care that we would wish to have

My caring role affects my life;

- Insufficient time or opportunity to explore a personal life
- Lack of financial security and income
- By limiting my choices, freedom, individuality and independence
- The absence of a personal social life with my own peers – e.g. being unable to attend occasional normal weekend activities or special events in the Community.
- Typical holidays do not happen – either as a Carer or as an Individual Adult.

I find it financially difficult because;

- Primarily, the demands of being a sole full time carer of an adult with dual disabilities, prevents me from being employed and earning extra income. As a sole Carer, I organise the household, two people's daily lives, try to maintain my older duplex unit, formally account for my recipient's expenditure and correspond and communicate with Government Departments and Private Organisations as the Guardian of the person I care for.
- The Carer's Payment and Allowance does not maintain the current real and basic cost of living. I therefore fit into the lower socio-economic group of Society and feel that this is how I am recognised and am limited.

Some of the practical measures that would better support me are;

- A more equal financial remuneration with employed members of the community
- A Superannuation allowance, plan or scheme that would provide sole fulltime family carers with some future financial security - as is provided to any other person in the workforce
- Occasional weekend respite
- Assistance for a yearly holiday, either by provision of respite during this time (24/7) for the person I care for, or a financial allowance when a holiday is restricted by the needs of the person I care for
- Appropriately trained and screened Care staff to support the person I care for so that I am able to have a little 'normal' life of my own and enjoy a real holiday.

This would assist me to;

- Financially contribute to my later years
- Have some personal time with the general community and activities.
- Look forward to and enjoy an occasional holiday as do people who work long hours and are not fulltime Sole Carers
- By lessening the stress, look forward to enjoyment of a longer, healthier and more productive life.

Thank you for taking my view 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

Patricia