

**The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600**

Inquiry into the cost of living pressures on older Australians

Approximately 222,700 or 13% of South Australians are family Carers, that is, someone who provides care and support for their parent, partner, child or friend who has a disability, is frail aged, or who has a chronic mental or physical illness. Some 39,500 of these are aged 65 and over.

There are many cost of living pressures on older family Carers. Energy costs continue to be central to these pressures.

Studies undertaken by Carers SA during 2002 and 2003 on significant electricity price increases indicated

- South Australian family Carers were devastated by a 32% increase in electricity costs over a twelve month period.
- Family Carers used 14.5% more electricity on average than other South Australian households.
- There was an increase in family Carers who struggled to pay their bills pushing them further into poverty.
- Carers were taking desperate measures, jeopardizing their health as well as the person they are caring for by cutting back on essentials like oxygen equipment, heating and cooling and some are even showering less just to try to cut costs.
- Family Carers relied on a regular and reliable supply of electricity and gas to maintain the equipment they needed for the health and well-being of the person they cared for.
- It is crucial that governments and energy suppliers continued to explore ways to provide appropriate financial and other support for family Carers least able to afford increased energy costs but for whom electricity is an essential commodity.

We attach the report prepared following the second of these studies, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Carers and Electricity Costs November 2003', for the committee's interest. The issues raised continue to be pertinent in 2007.

Thank you

Phil Saunders
Policy Project Officer
Carers SA
Box 410 Unley SA 5061
Ph: 08 8271 6288