

National Carers Coalition

Committee Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Email: fpa.sen@aph.gov.au
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**Submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee
Inquiry into Residential and Community Aged Care In Australia**

The Inquiry into Residential and Community Aged Care in Australia has only now come to our attention. We note that the closing date for submissions was 19 November 2008, and we trust that this submission will not be disregarded because it is made after the closing date.

We are making this submission with awareness of the decision at the Council of Australian Governments meeting in Canberra on 29 November 2008, in the context of the Reform of Roles and Responsibilities for Funding and Service Delivery between Governments, whereby COAG *agreed to consider in 2009 an ambitious program of reforms to roles and responsibilities for funding and delivery of services to the community. The goals of such reforms will be to deliver more integrated and responsive services for individuals and families, to clarify accountabilities between governments and to improve performance of service systems. COAG requested officials to bring back specific proposals in relation to community mental health, disability services and aged care in the first half of 2009 as part of this program.*

We submit that Australia has a two-track system for residential and community care: one track for people over 65 (known as Aged Care), the second for people under 65. For people under 65 there is the added complexity of distinct mental health and disability sectors.

While the National Carers Coalition has a focus on the disability sector, we believe our perspectives on carer and family carer issues arising out of the provision of residential and community care are relevant across sectors. Unfortunately, the consequences of decisions upon carers and families providing 'informal' care is often overlooked or given minimal consideration when service planners and policy makers are making decisions regarding the provision of 'formal' care.

We call on this committee to ensure that 'informal' care and the correlation with 'formal' care is given first order attention in this inquiry.

We direct the Committee's attention to the submission we have made to the House of Representatives Standing Committee for Family, Community, Housing and Youth Inquiry into Better Support for Carers, which is Submission 571 on the website <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fchy/carers/>

Particularly we direct attention to our Recommendations as being relevant across sectors:

1. The Federal Government immediately make funding provision for the implementation of a Disability Family Advocacy Network, commencing with grass roots regional bodies who will nominate their state and federal peak bodies as articulated in our submission addendum.
2. The Federal Government immediately legislate for Carer Rights, including the right to care or not care, the right to Carer Assessments and Entitlement to Support Services.
3. The Federal Government legislate for the introduction and funding of Population Based Benchmark Funding of Disability and Carer Support Services as a matter of **First Order Priority**.
4. The Federal Government immediately legislate to ensure that all full time family carers have access to **means test free** and **income tax exempt** carer payments that will include a cost of care component with no 25 hour work/study/ volunteering rule.
5. The Inquiry by the Secretary of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs into financial security for carers and seniors make a stand-alone report on financial security for Australia's 2.6 million carers to the Henry Commission Review of Australia's Future Tax System.
6. The Federal Government ensure that service agreement negotiation with the states and territories foster the provision of long day care for older children and adults with dependent disability aged less than 65 years to facilitate paid work opportunity for carers and to relieve the burden of caring on stressed families.
7. That the Federal Government ensure people with dependent disabilities have Legislated entitlements to assessments of need and access to accommodation and support services to meet those needs.

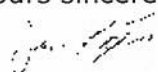
We submit to this Committee that its considerations must include:

- the impact on the provision of 'informal' care of the provision of residential and community care;
- the support needs of carers and families providing 'informal' care'

especially when considering (e) whether the current planning ratio between community, high- and low-care places is appropriate; (f) the impact of current and future residential places allocation and funding on the number and provision of community care places; and (a) whether current funding levels are sufficient to meet the expected quality service provision outcomes.

We would appreciate the opportunity to speak with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



For-State Liaison Carers, National Carers Coalition

Jean Tops / Margaret Ryan, VIC - Nell Brown / Mary Lou Carter, NSW
Felicity Madison AM / Robert Gow, QLD