

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. 1182
(Inq into better support for carers)
AOC 4/8/08

July 2, 2008

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 feel that carers and parents are not truly recognized for the crucial role they play within families & communities in Australia. Carers should be fully acknowledged for the huge amount of work and caring of family members/ people with a disability that is ultimately saving the government an enormous amount of money. The Government should remunerate carers adequately to improve their quality of life, well being and health. Research shows carers have less time to adequately maintain frequent medical check ups and take appropriate time out consequently suffering often from depression and other health issues at an earlier age than the general public.

1. The role and contribution of carers in society

As a carer, I feel that my role is extremely important in maintaining the choice and quality of life for my son that his peers expect as a right in every day life. Often the caring is physically and emotionally draining and without the support from my husband and family I would find it very difficult to continue in a worthwhile way. Carers contribute role modeling and mentoring for others within society, inspiring other people to develop their compassion and empathy for others – as "there by the grace of God go I"

2. The barriers to social and economic participation for carers

As a carer, I face the following problems and barriers include restricted access social participation in community activities and invitations from friends become few and far between. The reasons usually revolve around the fear of the unknown or the disability i.e. how do people cater for wheelchair accessibility when the majority of houses are generally built without ramps and disabled toilets? You just do not get invited over. Carers receiving Centrelink Carer allowance and payments are living in poverty compared to minimum wage earners. This severely affects the quality of life for carers and their family members in restricting their opportunities to access to education, health and social activities. Employment opportunities for carers are severely restricted due to the constant amount of care and supervision required for people with disabilities – carers just do not have the available time to hold down a part time job let alone a full time job. Any carer that does have spare time outside the caring role should be used as well earned respite or time out to de-stress an relax so the caring can be maintained.

3. The practical measures required to better support carers

As a carer, I need help with ensuring better services and choices for my son. Agencies must address the lack of communication issues between workers and management so people with disabilities can be assured of more choices and a better quality of life. Improved public wheelchair accessible transport in Hume Region especially Wangaratta. Better access to information regarding disability services and how to navigate the service system.

4. Strategies to assist carers to access opportunities and choices

I think the Government can better help carers by ceasing to patronize parents and carers, listening carefully to carers issues and responding by actively implementing negotiated resolutions. Making out of hours flexible care more available for carers. Encourage carers to seek out de-stressing activities, education, and physical activities to maintain well being and health. Offer other family members time out, counseling, and opportunities that peers expect as a matter of course.

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

Sally
