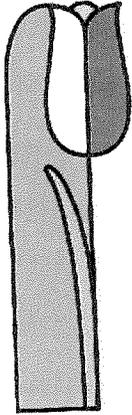


Submission No. 785

(Inq into better support for carers)

Doc 15/7/08



SHOALHAVEN PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP



30 June 2008

Ms Annette Ellis MP
Committee Chair
Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Attention: The Inquiry Secretary

Reference: Better Care for our Carers
New parliamentary enquiry
Media release 14 May 2008

SUBMISSION

I am in receipt of the above media release received from Ms Kate Huntington, from the office of the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, following my letter to The Hon Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister, regarding Carers Allowance (refer attached).

As set out in above media release and specifically the five items the Committee will inquire into and report on, our group wish to make the following comments:-

The Shoalhaven Parkinson's Support Group has approximately 103 members, of which 50 are Carers.

The contribution of Carers are very substantial and although their role is recognized within our group and our organization, support is for Carers, particularly in regional and rural areas limited. The Shoalhaven region covers an area of over 4000 sq,km which includes 43 towns and villages.

Our regional health and support services come under the control of the South Sydney and Illawarra Health Services and most of the resources available within this service are concentrated on the south Sydney and Illawarra (Wollongong) area where the population is greater and demand is higher, limiting services available to us.

RESPITE CARE

The main concern for our Carers is the availability of health support services in providing Home Care Respite and/or temporary Nursing Home Respite Care.

The main recognition that Carers require from Federal and State governments', and the community at large, is understanding and support of their need for respite care.

The majority of our Carers accept their roll of caring, however, when they are desperately in need of respite care for their loved one, they have been reduced to tears from exhaustion and frustration at not being able to readily access these services.

We, as a group, also request that The Committee consider the subsidising of temporary Nursing Home Respite Care to the maximum of 80% of cost of this respite care for those Carers whose only income is Commonwealth Aged and Disability Pensions Payments.

CARERS' ALLOWANCES

As set out in my letter to the Prime Minister regarding Carers Allowances, we request that The Committee consider our submission that the Commonwealth Carers' Allowance payment be increased.

Carers living in regional and rural areas are subject to much higher costs relating to travel than those in cities, particularly in accessing items such as medical and hospital services, now increased with the sharp rise in fuel costs.

Thank you for your consideration of our submission.

Yours faithfully

Barry Mitchell
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SHOALHAVEN PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP

8 March 2008

The Hon. Kevin Rudd
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT

Dear Prime Minister

Reference: CARERS ALLOWANCE

Further to reports in The Australian newspaper today's date that the annual Carers' bonus payment for those on Disability Pensions, Aged Pensions and for Self Funded Retirees will not be paid this year or in future by your Government, has been met by our members with disbelief and considerable distress.

Although we applaud and welcome the advice recently received from the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and the Minister for Human Services, through Centrelink, that the Utilities Allowance is to be increased, these payments only compensate for the cost of services such as rates, electricity and gas supply, and communication charges, which have escalated dramatically over the past two (2) years

FOR GOVERNMENTS, BE IT FEDERAL OR STATE, TO THINK THAT INCREASING THE UTILITIES PAYMENT WILL IN SOME WAY COMPENSATE THE CARER FOR THE CARING CARRIED OUT FROM THE HOME, AND FOR THE PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND FINANCIAL EFFORT NEEDED FOR THAT CARING, IS TOTALLY ERRONEOUS.

THE FINANCIAL SAVINGS MADE BY CARERS TO GOVERNMENTS AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE BY WAY OF REDUCED CARE FACILITIES AND HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE IS CONSIDERABLE AND POSSIBLY UNMEASUREABLE.

For many Carers in regional and rural areas, transport costs alone are considerable as public and/or private transport is either not available or unsuitable to the needs of transporting a disabled person with movement difficulties, particularly with wheelchairs and walkers, which are generally not accepted. Therefore the Carer has to provide their own transport, rely on the generosity of family or friends for help or pay for Community Transport Services.

In addition, there are other costs, such as Respite Care and Home Care Assistance, which has an impact on the Carer. Waiting times for Respite Care are caused by shortage of vacancies, and often are some distance away from the Carers' place of residence, which in itself adds additional expense and hardship. Home Care Assistance generally has staffing shortages or budget restraints. All these costs are paid out of pensions and the Carers' allowance.

The Shoalhaven Region (South Coast NSW) has some forty two (42) towns and villages, with the Princes Highway as the only main route between these towns and the City of Nowra (from Berry to the north, to Durras in the south) a distance of some 100 kilometers. For the majority of our members, to obtain specialist treatment or region hospital services in Nowra, requires travelling considerable distances, and for some, treatment also necessitates regular trips to Wollongong or Sydney.

I therefore respectfully request that if you and your Government are determined to cancel current and future ANNUAL CARERS' BONUS PAYMENTS for budgetary reasons, consideration be given to increasing the current Carers' Allowance of \$100.60 to \$126.00, an increase of \$25.40 per fortnight (\$686.40 annually), to help cover the increased financial burden and reduce the considerable stress that is being experienced by many Carers, particularly those only receiving the Aged Pension, caused by the continuing rise in costs relating to caring for a person AT HOME with mental or physical disabilities.

Yours faithfully

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