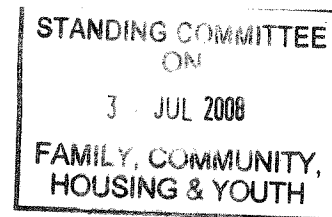


Committee Secretary
Inquiry into Better Support for Carers
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family,
Community, Housing and Youth
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



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...

Please see attached forms.

More information is attached on a separate sheet

1. The role and contribution of carers in society

As a carer, I feel that my role is...

More information is attached on a separate sheet

2. The barriers to social and economic participation for carers

As a carer, I face the following problems ...

More information is attached on a separate sheet

3. The practical measures required to better support carers

As a carer, I need help with ...

More information is attached on a separate sheet

4. Strategies to assist carers to access opportunities and choices

I think the Government can better help carers by ...

More information is attached on a separate sheet

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

Sue

Signature

Print your name

Sue

Date

26. 6. 2008

Postal Address

Contact Telephone Number

1. The role and contribution of carers in society.

My father has an acquired head injury. A drunk driver ran him off the road approximately 24 years ago.

My sister has schizophrenia. She recalls being mentally ill from the time she was 8 years old and was diagnosed at 20 years of age.

My mother and grandmother have both been diagnosed with schizophrenia.

I am a primary carer for two of my family members, my sister and father.

I am writing to your inquiry because I have watched 4 people I love live through incredible hardship which is not just due to their condition but also to lack of financial and emotional support.

I am just one person. I have suffered depression and have been in and out of therapy for the past 20 years due to the very sad situation of my family. Who wouldn't find it depressing? My sister and father are incredible people despite their problems.

During my experience as a carer the following is an example of what I do for my family.

Recently both my father and my sister have been sent letters from Centrelink that they were unable to interpret. On both occasions their disability support pensions were cancelled. If neither of my family members had a carer what do you think would happen to them? I envisage incredible emotional and financial stress.

They do not have the mental capacity to address such problems.

On both occasions the PBS card had also been suspended and as a result my sister was refused medication at the PBS price from our local pharmacist. To add insult to injury the pharmacist was rude and abrupt and offered my sister no advice or support while he was advising her of the situation. I was able to assist with immediate funds including the offer to pay full price for my sisters medication. During the 2 days it took me to get the problem sorted out she was very ill. She was so distracted in her mind she could not focus and almost fell from the railway platform at Werribee Station. I also took the liberty to address the inappropriate behaviour of the pharmacist.

She went through a very difficult time even with my help would you like to know how she would have coped without my help? I cannot bear to think.

My fathers' payments had ceased for months.

I have been a primary carer for 2 very disabled people for more than 20 years. My sister has told me that if I were to die she would kill herself. I don't need to state the incidence of suicide amongst this group of people to make my point do I?

What is the role and contribution of carers in society and how should this be recognised?

My role is invaluable. I financially and emotionally support 2 people. I also address their problems including several car accidents, experiences of extortion, and being victims of crime. I provide more basic care such as buying almost all of their clothes and preparing their meals. They are great people and I am happy (most of the time) to do this. My energy level and my emotional stability has its limits.

2. The barriers to Social and Economic participation.

Apart from the hours I spend caring for my family I spend time addressing their issues as stated above but also in the form of writing letters and attending training sessions to enable me to formally address problems they face in society.

I am training myself to write about the problems of my family to the world outside in a vain attempt to get some assistance for all people with a disability and their carers.

Other people, I guess, have more time to be more sociable, spend time pursuing careers and focus on a family they actually gave birth to, or parented.

The fact that I have emotionally been affected by the situation naturally causes me problems. My family's hardship affects the way I think and act and has caused problems for me socially.

I have refrained from pursuing a better career path and at one point I ceased my role as a Sales Representative to work on a casual basis within the hospitality industry in order to provide better care for my father.

3. The practical measures required to better support carers.

How can carers be recognised?

More financial support and more resources. More free therapy! Currently Carers Victoria provides 6 free sessions per year. I think 26 sessions would be more appropriate.

I know of other carers who never get a break from their family situation. More respite is required and can be provided in a number of ways. Services which provide carers with "sessional carers" coming into the family home to help with cooking and cleaning.

What about a weekend away at a health spa on a quarterly basis? Some people might prefer the big city or a simple seaside location. Let us carers just THINK for a moment.

Sessional carers can either come into the family home for the weekend or the care recipient can go into respite.

The carer can be given financial assistance for the weekend away including all accommodation, meal transport cost.

I am not suggesting The Bahamas but somewhere refreshing.

Provide carers with gym memberships, movie tickets or short course fees.

They need a continual break.

4. Strategies to assist carers to access opportunities and choices.

We need more funding, more services and a "user friendly" service to access.

Centrelink is not "user friendly". Most carers probably don't even know what services are available. Some people don't regard themselves as a carer and are not counted in our support system. There needs to be public campaigning and advertising to address this issue.

Centrelink records are available to ascertain who carers are. The government should get in touch with all carers including actually phoning people not just sending letters. The range of services there are needs to be addressed. Feedback and suggestions from all carers should be recorded and used to develop a strategy.