

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

AOC 16/7108

**Submission No. 814**  
(Inq into better support for carers)

Dear Secretary

We 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.

We are submitting to the Inquiry because...

As a Carers' Group we would like to raise awareness of Carers' issues and strengthen

Support for carers

**1. The role and contribution of carers in society**

As carers, we feel that our role is...

Very important

Often undervalued by governments

"You couldn't afford to pay us for the work we do

"We are invisible volunteers

Our contribution to the economy far outweighs carer payments

We save the system enormous amounts of money and provide high quality care 24/7 for our loved ones

**2. The barriers to social and economic participation for carers**

As carers, we face the following problems ...

Loss of identity

We are on duty 24/7, which can be socially and emotionally isolating, and impacts on our ability to seek paid employment or pursue volunteering in our community

Poor public transport options, especially as we often have to travel far to seek specialist services for our loved ones

Out of pocket expenses for regionally based specialists, even when on a pension

**3. The practical measures required to better support carers**

As carers, we need help with ...

Respite access-longer hours to suit carers, ie so called 4 day blocks are actually less, as we book in at 4.00pm on Day 1, and have to check out by 10.00am on Day 4

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Easier advance planning for respite

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Less red tape, simplified and less fragmented systems

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Improved access to our choice of specialists and specialist services

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Improved transport options in our rural area

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Improved pharmaceutical benefits

Available Bulk billing in our rural area

Adequate holiday relief- currently, the cost of respite is 85% of the pension, which means many of us can't afford to go away for a break, even when our loved one is in respite care

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

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

Better co ordination of services- one of our members received 6 different letters from CentreLink on the same day!

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Ensuring adequate carer payments are ongoing

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Payments that keep abreast with price hikes

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Universal Bulk Billing in rural as well as metro areas

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Improved Pharmaceutical benefits

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Thank you for taking our views into consideration as part of the Committee's Inquiry. We look forward to reviewing any recommendations you make to improve life for carers in Australia.

Yours sincerely

*On behalf of the Carers Support Group, Benalla, Victoria*

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*Signature Deborah M A Smirth*

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*Print your name Deborah Smith, Community Health Nurse/Facilitator, Cares Support Group, Benalla*

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*Date 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2008*

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