

"A 'Mirror' Report on Carers" says Carers Alliance of NSW

<http://www.carers.org.au/>

The Carers Alliance is profoundly disappointed in the Better Support for Carers Report released last week by the Rudd government. The Report can be only described as a 'mirror report' - recommendation after recommendation for one government minister or another to "look into it". From the tired and hackneyed title " Who Cares?" to the 50th recommendation there is little in the report which will see any immediate improvement in the situation for thousands of family-carers who provide round-the-clock care to people with dependent disabilities.

The federal parliamentary committee of inquiry, chaired by Labor MP Annette Ellis, recommends a top-heavy and administration-heavy way for the Government to provide more support for carers.

Marylou Carter from the Carers Alliance said "Carers don't need this report's multiple recommendations. They were hoping for one primary recommendation that actually offered a solution to the crisis in care - that the Federal Government move to investigate as a matter of urgency, the feasibility of introducing a National Disability Insurance Scheme, funded by a community-wide levy".

"Instead, the Ellis committee recommends more Band-Aids to cover the failures of Australia's disability support system. It recommends the continuation of a piecemeal, disjointed and inequitable system".

Rather than the report's 50 recommendations the many carers who contributed to this inquiry were hoping the Committee would grasp the need for, and recommend urgently:-

1. Population-based benchmarks for service provision for all people with dependant disability, no matter the age that the disability was acquired
2. Legal recognition of the rights to vital support services, both for the carer and the person in need of care
3. Funded Carer Family Advocacy on a State and Regional level
4. Carer allowances and payments to be restructured to better reflect the level of care provided
5. Tax concessions and parity with foster and kinship carers where there is no means-testing for carer payment and carer allowance for family-carers of people with highly dependent disabilities

“Over the past few years, most of the recommendations of reports into Australia's disability service system and the carers who provide unpaid care at enormous savings to government, have been ignored. Which of course inspires little faith among carers that this report will not just be another time- and money-wasting whitewash, doing little to alleviate the isolation, exhaustion, poverty, fear and despair which is the lot of so many carers all around the country." said Ms Carter.

“Carers are sick of being referred to as ‘unsung heroes’ while being ignored and exploited. Speak to any carer and you will hear about the *fight* to obtain services. The government has turned the plight of carers into the cause of poverty, when the poverty exists only because the services and supports do not”.

“It is fundamentally wrong in a wealthy nation to be forced to give up your social and economic life for decades simply because services that would allow you to participate and be economically productive remain unfunded through our tax system. Politicians have a moral obligation to ensure that all people with disabilities have equitable services based on need rather than on age and in so doing would simultaneously provide better support for carers" said Ms Carter.

Both carers and those for whom they care are let down by the Who Cares? report as it offers very little that is meaningful in the way of service provision which would allow either the carer or the person in need of care to live anything resembling an ordinary life, the simple expectation of our fellow citizens.”, Ms Carter said.

Ms Carter notes: “Ironically the Report's opening words are: 'Carers – usually spouses, parents, grandparents, children, siblings and sometimes friends or neighbours – have asked to be heard, to have a voice of their own'.... Yet the report does not recommend that carers be given what many carers asked for - their own funded advocacy. Carers are told they must make do with the service provider to carers, Carers Australia and its state organisations, must also be their advocate which is not only a clear conflict of interest, it is not conducive to transparency and is certainly not in the interest of good governance.

“Carers do need a voice of their own, one that is fearless in speaking out about injustices in public policy that condemns tens of thousands of our fellow citizens to isolation, loneliness, ill-health and crushing poverty: In this Report family-carers have been reduced to footnote status which is beyond the pale. Carers have had enough. Living on the fringes is no longer acceptable to family-carers nor to

the people for whom they care, they want to be part of the mainstream of community life and to participate in the social, cultural and economic life of Australia, just like everyone else." said Ms Carter.

LISA Comment: The main complaint appears to be that there is no light at the end of the tunnel for those carers who are no longer able, or around to provide care. We say, "Let's go for a Quaddie!"

"Can we do it? Yes we can!" - President Barack Obama said.

This is, "Carer Support", "Accommodation and Support", "National Disability Insurance" and a "National Family/Parent/Carer Association".

We therefore need an "Action Plan" (to include the sub components) for each of the four (4) main components, to implement and coordinate the components within the Mission Statement, *"Families need the support to be carers for as long as they wish to be, in the knowledge they have the right to a quality of life care accommodation and support package for their family member with a disability whenever they choose"*.

In conclusion, our interstate friends can check-out submissions to the Victorian Government Inquiry into Supported Accommodation at:

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdc/>

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