

# Carers shouldn't have to ask for help

Caroline Overington The Australian May 27, 2010

The letter put out by the Carers Alliance on Sunday, 23 May, and read out (on networked stations across Australia) by broadcaster Alan Jones on Monday, notes that carers - in particular, the creaking elderly who take care of their own profoundly disabled children, many of whom are also adults but who have to be helped into their clothes by ageing, and yet still devoted mums, and sat down on the toilet and wiped by greying, but still gentle fathers - have heard Kevin Rudd going on about fairness. We're a fair country, he says. We believe in a fair go, for all Australians.

Carers couldn't be more delighted and so they've put forward a modest claim, for a better deal. Here's what they want: a statutory 70-hour week. That's right. No more getting up three times a night for 83-year-old mother to take her 54-year-old Down syndrome son to the toilet, every night, for 54 years until she's demented or dead.

Also, two weeks paid annual leave. Not four weeks, like the average person gets, but two weeks a year where they wouldn't have to change the nappies of adult daughter with cerebral palsy, or quell the screams of a giant son in pain, but would be able to go to a nice little motel somewhere, maybe have a bite to eat in a seaside pub, knowing that their grown-up disabled children were also somewhere safe, and stimulating.

Then, too, they'd like a statutory retirement age of 70. As it stands, they have to work until their own weakened frames give out (but never their hearts; they just stay broken) or their minds begin to falter, at which point, the government normally pressures a sibling to step up, before finally finding an entirely unsuitable aged-care bed, on a ward with Alzheimer's patients.

And that's not all. They'd also like all disabled people, including children, to have a legal right to equipment, such as a wheelchair, and maybe even a hoist, to help them out of bed.

It's an outrageous joke, obviously. Not the claim. No, the fact that they'd even have to ask.

LISA Comment: Welfare in Australia is DIY. This young, bronzed, John Wayne county sees little reason for rights based welfare. So people with a disability must beg, crawl and lick bureaucratic boots for the few crumbs the bureaucrats might allow them.

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