

22 January 2011

**Submission to the Productivity Commission
Caring for Older Australians – Draft Enquiry Report**

As the carer of both my elderly mother and father, aged 91 and 88 respectively, I hereby submit my objections to some of the proposals recommended in this report.

My father is very frail and suffers various illnesses and my mother has advanced Alzheimers. I currently receive the Carer Payment and Carer Allowance. If I was not caring for my parents and living with them on a full-time basis, they would both need to be in full-time aged care.

My parents are pensioners and have few assets (a small amount of money in the bank which will cover their funeral expenses) and their home.

I find it extraordinary that the report recommends that the aged will have to start selling their homes to cover their aged care costs within the next two years. Thanks very much Productivity Commission for putting this kind of immediate pressure on people like my parents. My father worked hard all his life and fought the Japanese in WW2 and this is the thanks he gets. All my parents have is their house.

I do understand that, because of the vast number of baby boomers (of which I am one), there will not be enough funding to cover aged care in the future but why penalise people of my parents' age in this way. It is grossly unfair. When the baby boomers start to require aged care facilities, that's when these kind of recommendations should start, if at all.

I might also add that there seems to be little thought for someone such as myself, an informal carer (a term I particularly dislike by the way). For a start I am doing the job of an enrolled nurse and do not like the word "informal" and find it offensive. I believe only 2% of people do what I have done i.e. given up a permanent well paid job to live with my parents and care for them. I moved 300 kms from my former home to live with my parents where I have no friends and no social life.

My life is stressed enough as it is without discovering this morning that there is now a high possibility that if my parents need to go into an aged care facility, I will end up homeless, will inherit nothing and have to rely only on unemployment benefit for my troubles – I am a single woman with no children and am 61 which renders me virtually unemployable. Quite frankly, I should

have stayed where I was and not moved to help them because then at least I would have more super stashed away for when I'm old.

As a baby boomer when I'm old and if I require aged care, I won't mind having to sell my house (if I'm lucky enough to own one) because that's probably at least 20 years down the track and I could plan for it. But to all of a sudden make this kind of rule apply to people such as my parents is absolutely disgraceful. And I mean disgraceful.

Here are some questions with regard to these recommendations:

- What happens if the house in question cannot be sold. In our area, houses stay on the market for months and there are no buyers.
- I take five/six weeks a year respite – the only time I have off – looking after my parents is a 7 day a week job. Will these respite costs still be subsidised and affordable as they are now allowing me to have a holiday.
- Will the situation of carers such as myself be considered or will they just be left by the wayside once the people they care for go into aged care. In my case, as mentioned above, this would render me homeless with my income being dramatically reduced. Will anything be done to help people such as myself survive such a transition bearing in mind I have saved the Government a lot of money by looking after my parents rather than their being cared for in an aged care facility.

I cannot tell you how angry I am after reading the recommendations in this report. You just cannot apply these recommendations to people the age of my parents. They do not deserve such treatment. It has caused my father much stress and anxiety.

Christine Casey