

Brief comments received

No.	Comment
1	<p>In considering paid or unpaid leave for carers of the frail elderly, close consideration should be given to issues such as evidence of care being given, approval processes for care being given (subjective not objective) and parameters around the length of time available to given for leave. Sadly any leave given may not be sufficient to address the needs of the carer. the decline of the elderly is a slow, gradual and increasingly burdensome process. The overwhelming burden usually felt by a single family member cannot be over-stated. Other siblings either live elsewhere or are disengaged from the responsibility of needing to share the carer burden. For 21 years I have provided increasing care for an elderly widowed parent and my needs were not a factor. My situation has only been relieved by his recent death. When considering leave provisions for a carer of a frail elderly person, consideration should be given to issues such as the inability of the carer to have any input into situations such as hospital discharges or moves to permanent aged care. Unless the frail elderly person has dementia and the carer can invoke a Power of Attorney the carer is unable to have their own needs recognised in the process. The burden of caring usually falls to one individual without recognition that they have other responsibilities, e.g. the sandwich generation. We are unable to say in the needs of the elderly person, to have our care burden recognised and our needs are completely ignored when things like hospital discharges are being organised. The wishes of the frail elderly are prioritised over the wishes or needs of the carer and the only consideration. Comments in an ACAT recognising carer fatigue have no value. Approved leave is a good first step however many carers are trying to maintain their own immediate family unit, work to contribute to the family income or build a career all whilst providing care for the frail elderly. The struggle is real, overwhelming and not short-term.</p>
2	<p>I appreciate the inquiry as it can be extremely difficult for carer's of the elderly or people (of any age) with a disability to be able to maintain employment. My comments pertain to the ability for carer's to access unpaid leave without it affecting superannuation or the career trajectory of the carer eg if someone needs to take time off to be a carer, they should not be demoted to a more junior position (and hence earn even less money). This pertains to people in full-time/part-time work and ideally should be considered for those in hourly rate contractor/casual working arrangements as well.</p>
3	<p>People under age pension age are usually eligible for Carer Payment. After a decade of having to work part time (with major impact on superannuation balance) the day I reach age pension age, what I have managed to put into superannuation gets counted in the assets test and I lose the carer payment. I still have to do the same carer duties 24/7 365. Doubly penalized! Please look into this as part of your investigation.</p>

4	<p>I am 68 years old, I have lived in Australia since 2014, but until May of this year 2022, I have not been able to obtain my permanent resident visa. I am taking care of my husband who is 71 and has Alzheimer's. I am not working away from home. I do not receive any carer's subsidy from the government, and I do not receive an old age pension. We survived on my husband's pension of \$711 every two weeks, which was reduced when we married. I am taking care of him 24 hours. Also my knee is hurting because the meniscus has been torn. This is my situation. It is not easy to live like this.</p>
5	<p>This comment is on the Issues Paper on Carer's Leave. I am a PhD. student at the University of Sydney Business School examining the impact of public and employer policy such as carer's leave on employees who are also informal eldercarers. The Commission's draft report should focus on paid as well as unpaid carer's leave to assist informal eldercarers and other carers in employment (see ToR: 'consider alternative [to extended unpaid carer's leave] ways to support informal carers to support older Australians'). Some ideas are set out below. Gender inequality. The Productivity Commission should place a greater emphasis on addressing workplace gender inequality as it is compounded by informal eldercare provision. Although men provide much informal eldercare, women provide more and provide it more intensively. Women will more likely have taken unpaid time off work or reduced their work hours during child-rearing years. Further unpaid leave in their later years when they are building up their superannuation will increase gender-related poverty in old age. Employment rights for informal eldercarers Improving unpaid carer's leave needs to be examined alongside improving paid carer's leave, to help informal carers remain at work either full-time or part-time. This includes explicitly widening the circumstances when leave can be taken to, for example cover a care recipient's medical or financial appointments. In particular, the extensive and often unseen work undertaken by informal eldercarers of those in residential aged care needs better understanding and support. Discrimination in paid carer's leave arrangements Paid carer's leave is part of an individual's personal paid leave entitlement covering sick leave. As more women than men take time off work to provide care for relatives, providing a separate right to paid carer's leave would remove a source of discrimination. Additionally, a higher proportion of women than men (particularly in older ages) work as casuals. Casuals are not entitled to paid carer's leave. This needs to be remedied. Unpaid leave The academic evidence suggests unpaid leave from work combined with paid leave, a return to the job guarantee and other work arrangements enhances the likelihood of future work participation of carers. Informal eldercarers need such rights, possibly along the lines of parental leave. The role of enterprise bargaining Improvements in employment entitlements through bargaining are usually made by the most unionised workforces with the most industrial power. The most equitable way for changes to occur is through statutory entitlements. This also benefits small businesses by providing a floor of statutory rights which cannot be undercut by competitors. Where additional arrangements are made for carers by employers, these are often subject to managerial/employer agreement and are not entitlements. Improved rights to carer's leave should be widely publicised.</p>
6	<p>It is worth noting that the comment in the Executive Summary about caring as a source of personal satisfaction is not a corollary. It's very close to a gender-based assumption that caring is a female task like childrearing and has its own rewards. Caring is often not a choice, falls to people with no skill, aptitude or time and is a constant source of stress and consequent ongoing work and financial pressure. Managing for someone's death is not inherently satisfying for many people. Managing two people's is a career ending, financial disaster from personal experience. It is also worth noting that many women who take on extensive caring responsibilities and leave the workforce can do so because a partner provides a stable income. Single people, or single income families likely do not have that option and so cannot benefit from unpaid leave.</p>

7	<p>Allowing informal carers to take extended unpaid leave from their work to care for older people or person with disability at home, will provide the valuable option and security to those just needing some time sort things out, without the fear of longer-term implications of quitting a job. The lack of this support means continuing ongoing struggles of trying to 'dot it all' or abruptly having to give up a job and income.</p>
8	<p>As a long-term carer of two children with autism, who are now young men, I have found the biggest barriers to gaining employment to be: lack of support by employers to take on someone with caring responsibilities, lack of bargaining power to gain employment while also being a carer, lack of in-home support hours to allow me to look for employment, and a lack of carer rights to gain casual/part-time employment which results in active discrimination on the part of employers. There is also a lack of positive stories about carers entering the workforce and the benefits they can provide to employers. I think all government departments and funded organisations should be required to collect data on the number of carers working for them and the numbers of carers they are actively hiring.</p>
9	<p>While I understand the scope of this enquiry relates to the examination of the economic and social impacts of allowing informal carers to take extended unpaid leave from their work to care for older people who are frail and living at home, it is attempting to address a tertiary issue, rather than addressing the primary issue which is a catastrophic lack support for older people as they attempt to 'age in place' in their own homes, and the high impact this is having on their adult children given there is no, or very limited access to services and support, specifically in regional areas. Merely making changes to workplace legislation will not address the root cause of the matter, one which was created by a shift in government policy that created the massively burdensome, yet highly ineffective My Aged Care. I submit this feedback to you from a place of lived experience relating to the seeking of in-home support for both my mother 72, (full time carer to my father who does not drive and requires high level medical care, and last week diagnosed with cancer) and father 78, who live approximately 27 km from the regional centre of Shepparton, Victoria (while considered regional, are not considered remote or very remote in terms of capacity to deliver services) At present they can receive a maximum of 1.5 hours cleaning support per fortnight which leaves the rest of the family taking constant leave from work to attend medical appointments, transport, grocery shopping, social support, cleaning, gardening, household maintenance etc). Please fix the current system or go back to funding locally based not profit organisations who can deliver these supports effectively and in a timely way. Our family is struggling to cope.</p>
10	<p>I'm concerned about narrowing 'caring' for older people who are frail living at home. Caring can take all types of person definitions. What is older? Older than who? The person providing the care? My late husband, who I cared for until he died in 2020, was older than me, but he could have not been older than me. Can caring be short term, for example, whilst a person recovers from critical illness or mental health. The definition seems too narrow, what is ultimately needed is flexibility in your work arrangements that allow you to work but also care for others, whoever they are.</p>

11	<p>Hi we have a daughter with Myalgia Encephalomyolitus ? (ME) also known as Chronic Fatigue. She has been bedridden and cared for by us (my wife and are both in our early 70's) for over 6 years with our daughter being hospitalised for 19 weeks during that time. We have an excellent doctor who can do home visits but usually is now a phone call every 3 to 4 weeks call to my wife regarding her illness status and medication monitoring. People with long covid and ME are the hidden illnesses effecting thousands of families and are supported by a hidden army of at home carers. It is 24/7 with very little respite. Maybe there will be more recognition and carer support possible in the future in this mostly invisible health area. Carers and the ill in the meantime soldier on as they also age! Appreciate any support via informed policy and practical supports. Thanks for the opportunity to bring this to your attention.</p>
12	<p>I am 73 years old and a full time carer for my wife who has a genetic disease and other health related problems. As a result of this unavoidable health problem we have no superannuation and survive solely on the pension. I appreciate the commission inquiring into suitable leave for carers in the workforce who deserve all the help they can get. I would appreciate if the commission could recommend a superannuation package for carers who have had to leave the workforce to care for a loved one.caring is a gratifying and full time job and all carers need to be cared for.</p>