

**PUBLIC INQUIRY
DISABILITY CARE AND SUPPORT
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

Submitted by:

John Foster

Disability, Caring and The Australian Productivity Commission - A critical analysis

On 17 February, 2010, the Terms of Reference for an Inquiry into a national disability long-term care and support scheme were received by Australian Productivity Commission employees from the Federal Assistant Treasurer. A joint media release from the Assistant Federal Treasurer, the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services subsequently announced ...

'Australian Government to consider new approaches to disability.'

The inquiry by Commission staff commenced mid-April, 2010, and their report is to be completed by 31 July, 2011.

Background

For several decades now the Australian disability sector has been beset by worsening crisis, manifest at the institutional level by disagreement over funding arrangements between the various States (responsible for disability service delivery) and the Commonwealth government, and, at the individual 'consumer' level, a marked decline in the provision of publicly-funded supported accommodation. For untold numbers of Australian citizens this appalling, dysfunctional mismanagement of the sector imposed undue and un-necessary *additional* hardship and stress upon the lives of some of the most vulnerable citizens of our society, including some 1.6 million unpaid family caregivers or 'Carers' of Australians under 65 with multiple, dependent disability.

The term 'crisis' is originally a medical term employed by members of the medical profession to describe a situation wherein they have reached the limit of the accumulated knowledge and expertise necessary to effect the cure of a disease or trauma, thereby having to leave the uncertainty of whether the patient survives or dies to the body's own mysterious inner essence. In other words, *the system* is in crisis - be it the system of modern medical care, public housing, public education, public transport, the 'free market' or the provision of publicly-funded disability or mental health services. It is in a state of crisis because those in charge of the system are unable to re-solve either its endemic limitations or contradictions, *or*, as in the case of the disability sector, the resultant deprivations, social isolation and suffering that impact the lives of so many individual Australians and families as the result of such failure.

Across the nation, the State (our elected 'people's representatives' in the various Parliaments and the all-powerful 'executive' bureaucrats who serve and 'advise' them) are *already* well appraised (through data produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and seemingly endless surveys, 'consultations', investigations, reviews, reports and so on) of the quantity, quality and economic

value of the 'informal' (unpaid) personal care and special accommodation needs selflessly provided – around the clock, year after year – by young and ageing parents and grand-parents alike and, in

some circumstances, other relatives or friends of Australians with dependent disability... some \$32 billion per year saving to Australian taxpayers.

Thus, even the briefest and most undemanding consideration of the relationship between Disability, Caring and the Australian Productivity Commission reveals an obvious incongruity, a lack of intellectual coherence and power imbalance in this latest manoeuvre or strategem by the Australian State, in an attempt to 'manage' or bring under their control the enduring crisis besetting the ever-expanding 'DisAbility' sector.

This enormous *social* 'crisis' calls into question, then, the relation between the individual, the families of which they are a member and the State.

Disability Care and Support Public Inquiry

A visit to the Productivity Commission website reveals that

The Australian Government has asked the Productivity Commission to undertake a public inquiry into a proposed long-term disability care and support scheme.

Among other things, this inquiry will examine:

- how a scheme should be designed and funded to better meet the long-term needs of people with disability, their families and carers
- how to determine the people most in need of support, the services that should be available to them, and service delivery arrangements.
- the costs, benefits, feasibility and funding options of alternative schemes
- how the scheme will interact with the health, aged care, informal care, income support and injury insurance systems
- its impact on the workforce
- how any scheme should be introduced and governed
- what protections and safeguards should be part of the scheme

According to the website

The Productivity Commission is the Australian Government's independent research and advisory body on a range of economic, social and environmental issues affecting the welfare of Australians.

Its role, expressed simply, is to help governments make better policies in the long term interest of the Australian community.

Research at the Productivity Commission

The Commission's core function is to conduct public inquiries and studies commissioned by the government on key policy or regulatory issues bearing on Australia's economic performance and community wellbeing.

To support these activities, the Commission conducts research into diverse issues affecting productivity, the performance of the Australian economy, the management of resources and the welfare of Australians.

Briefly informing the reader of its Visiting Researcher Program, it goes on to reveal the Research Themes of the Commission

Research Themes of the Commission

The Productivity Commission has an ongoing mandate to contribute to the understanding of productivity and its determinants. Current research themes are:

- Productivity performance and its determinants
- Environmental and resource management
- Labour markets - including distributional and other social dimensions
- Economic models and frameworks to aid policy analysis

Employment Opportunities

Vacancies

The Commission requires employees with particular skills and experience to replace departing employees or to work in specialized areas of new work allocated by government.

In general the skills required fall into two categories:

- Economists (Economics/Law, Commerce, Environmental Economics, Labour Market Economics, Econometrics)
- Corporate and Line area support

We seek highly motivated individuals with a strong commitment to working in teams, highly developed oral and written communication skills, and a high level of computer literacy. You will also be a specialist in your field of economics, or corporate support (HR, Finance, Library, Public Relations, Information Technology or administrative support to line area teams).

Examples of Current Commissioned Projects (include, inter alia)

- Rural Research and Development Corporations
- Bilateral and Regional Trade Agreements
- Annual Review of Regulatory Burdens on Business

Recently Completed Projects (include)

- Wheat Export Marketing Arrangements
- Market Mechanisms for Recovering Water in the Murray-Darling Basin, and
- Gambling

Previous Commissioned Studies (include, inter alia)

- Battery Eggs Sale and Production in the ACT
- Chemicals and Plastics Regulation
- Impact of Commonwealth Indirect Taxes on Exporters
- Impact of Foot and Mouth Disease in Australia
- Modelling Economy-wide Effects of Future Automotive Assistance
- Review of Regulatory Burden on the Upstream Petroleum (Oil and Gas) Sector

Commissioners Appointed to Conduct the Inquiry

We are informed from the website that two full-time Commissioners and one Associate Commissioner have been appointed for this Inquiry. The two full-time staff are both career bureaucrats, one with some two decades of employment within the Australian Public Service in senior roles (Deputy Secretary and Secretary) in Telecommunications and the Digital Economy; IT and the Arts; Human Services; Industry, Tourism and Resources; and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The second Commissioner has had nearly three decades in various Commonwealth Departments including Health and Ageing, Employment and Social Security, Family and Community Services and also Prime Minister and Cabinet. This incumbent has also worked within the international Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) including at the Australian Delegation in Paris.

Both incumbents hold Bachelor of Economics credentials, with one also holding a Master of Economics Degree and prior to joining the Australian Public Service was employed as an Economist at the Reserve Bank of Australia.

The Associate Commissioner is a Partner in the Advisory Practice of PricewaterhouseCoopers, where he has worked for almost 18 years. An actuary by profession he is also a quadriplegic and has consulting responsibilities in the areas of health, disability and accident compensation. He is a Board member of the NSW Motor Accident Authority and the NSW Home Care Service as well as a statutory actuary to workers compensation authorities in NSW and South Australia. He is also a member of the Disability Investment Group, which reported to government in 2009 on funding ideas to assist people with disability and their families access greater support and plan for the future.

PricewaterhouseCoopers is one of four giant, global, private sector Financial Accounting and Management Consulting firms ('The Big Four') with extensive links to the world's largest highly profitable private Corporations and Governments of various description around the globe.

Why Now?

The last decade or so has witnessed the intensification of the crises confronting the 'DisAbility' sector of our society. This is despite the fact that hundreds of millions of public, taxpayer dollars have been allocated to various government bureaus and agencies, ***each and every year***, charged with the provision and delivery of 'disability services'.

During the course of the 're-structuring' of the Australian economy throughout the second-half of the twentieth century, cabinet ministers of both dominant political parties and their 'executive' public service 'advisors' across the various States and the Common-wealth, used the 'de-institutionalization' and closure of the limited number of State-managed facilities for people with dependent disability and mental illness as a Trojan Horse, in order to cost-shift the 'tax burden' away from extremely wealthy Australians and quite affluent Upper Middle Class families and corporations, and back onto the families of the disabled and the mentally ill. Rather than relying on State-run institutions (which few families of the disabled actually did) to care for those unable to take care of themselves because of physical, cognitive or mental disablement, the emphasis was suddenly switched to 'community care'. The trouble was, very limited funding was provided by the State for housing, in order to facilitate this latest wonderful 'new' strategy.

When they added 'welfare reform' to their 'strategic initiatives', and quietly abandoned the 'price control' aspect of the Prices and Incomes Accord (reached during an earlier administration) by de-regulating or 'freeing up' The Market for foodstuffs, housing or other accommodation rents, petroleum products, essential domestic utilities such as electricity, water and so on, the effect upon large numbers of 'ordinary' (that is, Working Class and Lower Middle Class) Australian families was highly stressful, and remains so to this day. For many of those families caring for a relative with dependent disability, the result was often traumatic, leading to family breakdown and, in several known cases, the eventual suicide and even the killing of their badly disabled family member.

Such personal and social tragedies provoked outrage within the Australian community and resulted in numerous public investigations, 'hearings' and so on, which were invariably followed by more (public) dollars being thrown at the problem, most often of little value to family Carers and of limited cost-effectiveness or 'value for money.'

Thus, the Inquiry into (the crisis *still* besetting) Disability Care and Support is simply the latest in a *series* of inquiries and reports, inter-departmental and inter-governmental reviews, COAG meetings and so on, by governments in all Australian States and the Commonwealth.

The Failure of Parliamentary Democracy

Surely in our Christian 'Democracy' ... our, "Rich Country", priority ought to be given, by right, to our most vulnerable citizens - including increasing numbers of Australians (and their families) suffering from the effects of mental illness.

But no.

And why?

Because our political leaders ... our most senior 'people's representatives' who make such decisions behind the closed doors of a Cabinet *and* their bureaucratic executive 'advisors', give priority to the political and economic interests of the major shareholders, owners and corporate executives of wealthy and influential national and foreign corporations and private companies ... including, but not limited to, some of the world's most powerful, such as those which dominate the global finance, mining and 'defence' industries. So much for 'open and transparent government'!

At the same time, the 'rewards' handed out to both our politicians and 'executive' bureaucrats, both during their public service careers and throughout their retirement, highlight the distinction between the notion of 'public service' and self-interest ... and that between 'the haves' and the 'have nots'. For in addition to their most generous superannuation 'entitlements', publicly-funded offices, travel entitlements and other similar benefits, many of these 'retired' Australians go on to take up positions on influential Boards of both private sector and highly profitable former public companies and enterprises ... many of which have been corporatised and sold off to already wealthy private 'investors' ... that is, 'privatised'!

Thus, despite the rhetoric of our economic and political leaders, this shameful, *man-made* 'crisis' besetting the disability sector directs our attention to a much broader and much deeper crisis besetting the over-arching and dominant global political-economic system of which it forms part. For the crisis impacting the daily lives of Australians with dependent disability, AND their often ageing and exhausted parent-carers, exposes the failure of the Capitalist system and its attendant State apparatus to facilitate the publicly-assisted delivery of essential material goods and services for our most vulnerable citizens.

The Inquiry into Disability Care and Support calls into question, then, the nature and role of the modern State, beginning with public utterances from leaders of the two dominant political parties about 'governing for ALL Australians', and the claim by its authors that the Productivity Commission is a body (of professionals) who are 'independent' of government.

Yeah right.

The audacity and cynicism of such public pronouncements are almost beyond belief!

The Role of the State in Society

According to dominant, popular political theory or mythology, the role of the modern State is to govern in such a 'democratic' manner as to ensure prosperity, justice, peace and security for all citizens. Developed in parallel with the technologically superior Capitalist mode of social

production, distribution and exchange of essential and desirable goods and services, Capitalism and The State are said to have replaced both the Feudal mode of production and distribution along with

the absolute, arbitrary rule of Monarchy, both of which are today said to be unjust and 'inefficient'. And for large numbers of citizens across the 'Western democracies', both Capitalism and the (capitalist) State have, up until now at least, 'delivered the goods'. . . if only in a number of somewhat distorted Platonic forms or ideas, and only for a limited majority of the citizenry.

But what about 'The Poor', 'The Needy', and 'those less fortunate' among us, I hear some ask?

That depends, according to others, upon 'fate', religious interpretation or ideology ("the poor will always be among us"), or Free Market, neo-Liberal gems of wisdom such as "they have not worked hard enough!" (...and are therefore un-deserving of any assistance - be it private philanthropy of some sort or, in particular, 'handouts' from 'the public purse').

The existence and marginalization, then, in our "rich country", of several million Australians with dependent disability or mental illness *and* their increasingly exhausted and impoverished family caregivers ... **PLUS** 'The Unemployed' (and under-employed), the traumatized survivors of illegitimate imperial wars of aggression in foreign countries, the broken survivors of work-related and road 'accidents', retired 'workers' (Pensioners) and so on exposes, for those willing to see, the contradictions, myths and ideologies of the Capitalist mode of production and distribution and the (capitalistic) State.

Each and every year, without fail, untold billions of public, taxpayer dollars are handed over by Cabinet Ministers and our 'executive' public servants to obscenely overpaid corporate executives of giant national and trans-national corporations in the form of 'industry assistance grants', tax breaks and other 'incentives' (Corporate Welfare!), and various forms of 'aid' to foreign governments, some of whom are known to be corrupt and despotic towards their own citizens. At the same time, those governments or groups of their citizens who resist and stand up to the predations of trans-national corporations, the International Monetary Fund, World Bank or the dictates of the Australian State are labeled 'terrorists' and 'failed states'.

Moreover, huge amounts of public money are also handed over by our public executives in charge of the scandal-riddled Defence Materiel Procurement Organization, to giant foreign arms corporations and foreign governments for the supply of 'weapons of mass destruction' (some already obsolete and second hand before we receive delivery) to be used 'supporting our allies' in wars of aggression in far-off lands, whose citizens posed little or no threat to the Australian people.

And although 'welfare reform' has been imposed upon several million alienated and marginalized Australian citizens over recent decades, the annual Budget allocations to 'Defence' remain sacrosanct ... untouchable, with guaranteed increases in spending, year after year.

The flagrant negation of humanity (war), which constitutes the very essence of the State is, then, from the latter's point of view, the supreme duty and the greatest virtue: it is called patriotism and constitutes the transcendent morality of the State.

Having shaken off the yoke of universal or cosmopolitan morality of the Christian religion, the modern State has not yet become permeated with the humanitarian ideal or ethic. As can be witnessed in the world's most militarized country on earth, the United States of America, Christianity (if not all religious belief systems) serves only as a pretext, a bromide to mislead the gullible and an excellent facilitator of social divisiveness and conflict: war is, after all, 'good for business' In an era dominated by technocratic knowledge and values, the aims pursued by those who constitute the State have nothing in common with religious or humanitarian values or goals.

What, then, constitutes their morality? ... Only State interests.

State Interests and 'States Rights'

The State is not society; it is only one of its historical forms, arising historically in all countries, out of violence and pillage, war and conquest. From its very beginning it has been, and remains, the divine sanction of brute force and gross injustice. Even in the supposedly most democratic countries – such as the USA and Switzerland, it is simply the consecration of the privileges of a minority and the enslavement, in one way or another, of the vast majority. (Think modern-day debt entrapment and wage slavery in both the 'advanced', and 'civilized' Western economies, as well as the 'developing', Third World economies, for example)

Humanity has been broken up into an indefinite number of States that are foreign, hostile and menacing toward one another. There is no common right, and no social contract among them.

The existence of a single, limited State presupposes the existence, and indeed provokes the formation of several States, as the individuals and groups who find themselves outside of this State and their existence and liberty menaced by it, confederate or league themselves against it. Thus, humanity is today divided into an indefinite number of States that are foreign, hostile and menacing toward one another. There is no common right, and no social contract, for if such a compact and right were to exist the various States would cease to be absolutely independent of one another, necessitating them to become federated members of a much larger and powerful State. And unless this great State embraces humanity as a whole, it will sooner or later experience the hostility of other great States, which are also federated internally. Every State, whether of a federated or non-federated character must seek, under the penalty of utter ruin, to become the most powerful of States: war will always be, therefore, the highest controlling influence and inherent necessity dominating humanity. The supreme law of the State is self-preservation at any cost.

This 'inherent necessity' is made doubly worse by the self-centered 'ethic' driving the private accumulation of endless amounts of surplus wealth or Capital. One of the most tragic results or outcomes of this deadly union is the monstrously obscene, globe-straddling giant known as the world's arms trade.

And as if we needed any further confirmation that the theatre of parliamentary politics is couched in the language and ethic of war, the following is the opening statement by the latest leader of the Federal Liberal Party – referred to by several of his Labor Party parliamentary ‘colleagues’ as ‘Taliban Tony’ Abbott – in a political advertisement broadcast nationwide on television ...

“The election is on, the battle lines are drawn...”

However we must avoid being deceived by this ‘macho’ rhetoric from the latest (temporary) leader of the English monarch’s loyal ‘opposition’ party in Australia, as the *real* battle lines have long been drawn between the (capitalistic) State and the ‘ordinary’ worker-citizens of this country.

For the violence of the State takes various forms, from the naked terrorism of ‘humanitarian’ wars of ‘liberation’ against unarmed women and their children, the elderly and the disabled (‘humanitarian interventions’ – “ya gotta kill a few folks in order to liberate ‘em”), to police actions against legitimate internal grievance and dissent, the arrest and incarceration for vagrancy or homelessness (the criminalization of poverty), the withholding or limiting of financial or other material assistance for public education, and the urgent, unmet needs of the disabled and their struggling families ... the hidden injuries of a society divided by socio-economic classes into ‘the haves’ and ‘the have nots’!

Thus, at both the internal level of the single State and the level of the federated great State, the States pay their outward respect to the *idea* of humanity, speaking and creating the illusion of acting in the name of it: but they violate it every day. The State is authority, it is force, it is the ostentatious display of and infatuation with power, all but abandoning to a most miserable fate, many of those Australian citizens with disability and their ‘captive’ family caregivers, as they fight among themselves over the absurd obfuscation referred to as ‘State’s Rights’!

The Failure of Corporate Managerialism

Neither our political nor corporate leaders, no matter how highly credentialed or ‘gifted’, can effectively manage (control) either the national or globalized, inter-national economic system without daily assistance from battalions of narrowly-trained, highly-certificated ‘professionals’ employed in ‘strategic’ or key portfolios, bureaus and government offices in numerous administrative and regulatory roles. Driven by the desire to be successful in their careers and the ideological clap-trap of neo-liberal economic theory and corporate managerialism, the incumbents occupying these senior, well-rewarded sinecures play an essential role in the development, implementation and policing of government policy and strategies or, to employ the latest buzzword, ‘good governance’.

The claim by its authors that the Productivity Commission is a body “independent” of government is utter nonsense, revealing, yet again, the cynical contempt in which our ‘leading’ bureaucrats view

the average Australian citizen. By their very own words, the Productivity Commission is an integral part of the wide and expanding array of government bureaus etc - both large and small - operating at both overt (mainly) and covert levels - such as the more secretive 'intelligence' bureaus or agencies, whose veiled, ultimate end-role is the protection of the accumulated financial fortunes and material assets ('private property') of extremely wealthy Australian families, along with something called 'Australia's security interests'.

Despite their espousal and promotion of ideals or ideas such as 'the good life', justice, equality, egalitarianism, democracy and the like, our bureaucratic and corporate leaders are nevertheless unable, nay, *unwilling*, to 'deliver the goods' for several million 'ordinary' Working Class and lower Middle Class Australian citizens, thus exposing - for any bothering to heed - the contradictions and injustice endemic to the Capitalist mode of social production and distribution of 'Australia's' common-wealth. Across the modern Western business sector the managerial culture is replete with military terminology and rhetoric, ranging from the ubiquitous 'mission statement' and 'manoeuvring' to the 'capture' of new (*and established*) markets, and 'strategies' for 'killing the competition'... the very same competition which is said to be 'healthy' and 'good' for 'The Economy'!

Sadly, the paradox is that there are those among the ranks of the more privileged *and* the bureaucracy who hold legitimate concern for and endeavour to provide assistance to 'those less well off' in our society. Among them are those who have applied their intellectual and other resources to acquiring 'specialist' knowledge and expertise in various 'professions' or divisions of labour within society.

These well-credentialed individuals are rewarded for their efforts by rising through the ranks of the managerial class, wherein their 'know how' is drawn upon when attempts are made to re-solve the contradictions manifest within 'The System'. Tragically, however, the combination of their narrowly-specialised training or 'education' and workplace socialization or culture effectively precludes them from the successful attainment of their social motivation and objectives. Paradoxically, for both these well-meaning individuals *and* the 'losers' in society whom they wish to assist, the emphasis upon *tekhne* or 'technique' throughout their training and subsequent employment as 'a professional' effectively negates their affective concern for others.

As then Associate Professor Michael Pusey observed during his in-depth sociological study of the top echelon of the Commonwealth Public Service (subsequent to the 'bold initiative' by the Whitlam regime of re-forming or 're-structuring' the institution), an intra-class struggle was ongoing between the economic technocrats or 'Economic Rationalists' and those holding to the more traditional values and ethic of 'public service'.

A similar struggle took place within the hallowed halls of the Faculty of Economics at the ‘prestigious’ Sydney University, where a dominant faction of technocratic adherents of Neo-Liberal or ‘Free Market’ economic *theory* sought to have removed from the university other faculty members struggling to bring balance to the curriculum through the teaching of Political Economy and economic history. Members of the academic staff were ‘disciplined’ and/or sacked, and undergraduate and postgraduate students ‘failed’, because of their ‘wrongful’ or ‘un-authorised’ preference to study Australian and international economic theory and practice from a different, more holistic perspective and methodology. This, in a highly-regarded, heavily publicly-funded *social* institution whose popularly perceived, if not formal, charter is the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, ostensibly for the universal benefit of humankind.

Like the ‘economic rationalists’ continuing to dominate government policy to this day – those in Treasury, Finance, Foreign Affairs and Trade and so on, and, as we have seen, the Australian Productivity Commission, the academic and financial administrators of Sydney University have long been the fortunate recipients of large amounts of public finance, both to enable them to produce ‘good governance’ of their respective institutions, whilst at the same time ensuring a ‘relaxed and comfortable’ if not affluent lifestyle (and life chances) for themselves and their families.

A closing note on ‘Quality Assurance’

Among the Commissioned Studies completed by the Productivity Commission, was an International Comparison of the Resourcing of Universities and the Management of those Resources (Report released Feb 2003)

In considering the governance of the corporate university, the Productivity Commission staff noted that

In the past, many universities, especially long established ones, had a tradition of extensive self-governance, sometimes guaranteed by royal or city charters. Members of the university community often chose peers to serve in governance and management positions while continuing other academic duties.

More recently, the composition, duties and powers of governing bodies have been commonly specified in state or national government legislation. The governing boards are typically comprised of university corporation members and government representatives — either appointed by government or elected by the university community.

Increasingly, universities have employed full-time executives and senior managers into positions formerly filled by seconded academics. This ‘managerial revolution’ is viewed by some as being inconsistent with the tradition of self-governance of the academic community. Corcoran (1999) also argues that employing full-time executive managers is in conflict with the common law right of members to govern corporations for their own interests — to fulfil the university purpose.

Further,

Governments expect universities to use funds to produce graduates and research that will contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the country. In meeting these objectives, governments also expect that universities will use public funds efficiently

Governments, either through direct regulation or by linking funding to university activities or outcomes, act to ensure that public funds are used to meet their objectives. For example, Australian universities are required to report on performance against government priorities (under the Australian Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan) that in turn shape university priorities.

Pointing out that the university and government processes of reporting, monitoring and auditing (integral for transparency and integrity) are examined in this chapter in the context of key university activities — quality assurance, financial asset management and physical asset management, the authors go on to inform the reader that

Quality assurance is concerned with activities that maintain or promote quality output. Defining quality output is difficult because the benefits of research and education accrue over a long period of time. As well, the quality of teaching and learning outputs is dependent, to some degree, on the quality of students. *Defining the quality of outputs, although an important governance issue, is beyond the scope of this study.*

Then, as now, the narrowly-trained, narrowly-focused technocratic employees of the *Productivity Commission* lack both the charter and expertise to effectively ‘research’ the qualitative aspects and (therefore) the *real* value of the ‘informal’ care (work) performed daily by hundreds of thousands of family Carers.

The Defiant Power of Hope

As any family Carer can tell you, the rhetoric of Government is one of clichés and platitudes. Yet despite the ‘world’s *worst* practice’ in disability and mental health ‘services’ by a cynical and mainly indifferent State, over 2 million family Carers somehow manage to sustain themselves through inspirational dignified courage and hope. So scandalous is the neglect and indifference to the plight of these ‘workers’ as to cause the authors of a 2007 Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into the crisis to conclude, *inter alia*

The Committee was acutely aware during this Inquiry that evidence of sub-optimal organisation and provision of disability services underscores an immense personal, social and economic burden affecting hundreds of thousands of Australians" [4.143]

The evidence of Carers, who undertake so much of the caring, brought home the reality to the Committee..... and;

The Committee recognises that the weight of that responsibility on countless families is a crushing and unreasonable one, and that much greater community assistance in that task is urgently called for.

The final Report of the Senate Inquiry into the Funding and Operations of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) was released on 8 February, 2007. The report made substantial new funding for disability accommodation and support services the Primary Recommendation out of 29 Recommendations.

Families are ***STILL WAITING!***

Those most deserving of well-earned respite from their most onerous role in society are some of the estimated 706,000 full-time primary Carers of people with severe and profound disability. In particular, those ageing parent-Carers who are still caring for 50 and 60 year old adult 'children' with complex physical and intellectual disability, because the State has abrogated any tangible sense of responsibility or compassion towards them. Perhaps then, and only then, might they die with the comforting knowledge that their profoundly disabled 'child' will be cared for in a publicly-funded, community-managed place of dignity for those who, because of a genetic birth disorder, disease, acquired brain injury or other trauma are totally dependent upon another human being for their continued survival.

And remember, anybody can suddenly and unexpectedly become a Carer in the blink of an eye.

