

## Supporting Document



**When I started to look after my daughter, I knew nothing about mental illness.** I had to learn everything from scratch. I had to push and push to get her the treatment she needed and to get information about the health service. It is at this stage—at the beginning—when a carer really starts to need help. It is then that mental health care workers and the hospital staff need to give the carer inclusive help, education and a plan of treatment that includes everything: housing, physical care for the patient and financial aid. Patients need to have comprehensive physical examination when they are initially diagnosed with mental illness.

**The financial burden on carers is terrible.** This needs to be taken into account and the system should offer more in the way of financial support. After all, carers are probably saving the health care system millions of dollars in terms of housing, around the clock care and de-facto therapy and treatment.

**Many people I know have had to sell their houses and use up their savings to support the care and treatment of their loved ones.** It should not be like this and being ill should not mean having to be poor or go bankrupt.

**Carers need information on how to access and navigate NDIS and the mental health system in general.** One of the main problems carers face is that this information is not provided. Carers themselves could provide each other with information, training and support if there were hubs or centres where the carers could get together and access education. How about holding mental health “expos” where carers could get together on a local or regional basis?

**In the Mornington Peninsula area there used to be a book published regularly called “Supportapedia” which was a manual with all kinds of very useful information in it, regularly updated.** The government has steadily withdrawn funding for these types of small but extremely useful projects. Why? Why should mental health not receive the same levels of funding and priority for action that physical health does?

**The current situation is one of demoralisation for people in Victoria who are full time carers of mental health patients.** There is a feeling that we have been ignored or even abandoned by the government and by the system. Carers have simply not been recognized and supported in the vital work they do. It is time for this to change.

**Involve carers** more in the health care system.

**Educate carers** and give them easier access to information.

**Support carers** more in their important work which they provide free of charge!

**Keep a check on hospitals** and carefully monitor the admissions and discharge process for mental health patients.

**Provide safe, affordable housing for mental health patients with trained staff, in situations where the patients will not be exposed to assault and or drugs.**

**Above all, make this Royal Commission worthwhile and make the very much needed systemic changes actually happen and reasonably soon, not in 10 years!**