



Media Release

Carers Australia is the peak national advocacy body for 2.5 million people of all ages providing care for family members or friends with a disability, mental illness, chronic condition or who are frail and aged.

ALL WORK, NO PAY

Carers Australia calls for better deal for Carers in Federal Election

Carers Australia, which represents the estimated 2.5 million unpaid carers through the country, called today for Australia's political parties to provide significant commitments in the upcoming Federal Election campaign.

Launching Carers Australia's election policy – "All Work, No Pay" in Melbourne today, Carers Australia President, Louse Gilmore, said the demands imposed by an ageing population would be one of the most important social issues facing the nation's leaders over the next few decades.

"All the research shows that the "Baby Boomers" – those born in the 1950's – are now being called upon to look after ageing parents, members of their extended families and friends. This issue should be very familiar to our politicians, because many of them fall into that category", Ms Gilmore said.

"Carers Australia will expect our political parties to address the issue seriously, with well-funded and researched policies aimed at supporting carers. A major issue is an increase in the current Carers Allowance, which currently stands at only \$45.05 a week", she said.

"Carers provide the bulk of community care for people who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition and who are frail or aged, and they're saving the country an estimated \$19.3 billion each year by keeping people in need of care out of formal care facilities. Carers represent all ethnic groups, ages, income groups and educational backgrounds, and many of them are 'hidden carers' who may need help but don't ask for it", she said.

"There are also carers in our community who have spent their entire lives caring for their sons and daughters with disabilities. They're ageing, too.

"Our policy outlines issues which we expect our elected representatives to address urgently in practical and meaningful ways to support carers in their everyday lives.

"They include:

- The development of an over-arching policy which formally acknowledges the role and contribution of carers, and provides choices and options to allow them to better manage their caring roles
- The doubling of the current Carer Allowance to at least \$90.10 a week to help them cover some of the costs of caring, and the payment of the Allowance to carers receiving the Carer Payment, regardless of where they live

- The removal of the current restriction of 20 hours a week for work and study to qualify for the Carer Payment - 75 per cent of Australia's carers are of workforce age, and they need more income and a longer working week
- A practical demonstration of Government support for carers by working with employers to offer flexible workplace policies and practices to support carers in the workforce
- Government support for affordable, high quality centre-based day care programs which operate at times which suit people in the workforce
- Government promotion and extension of schemes such as the Transition to Work program to help carers re-enter the workforce
- Increased funding for the Home and Community Care program, and significant reforms to the funding and assessment formulae for the program
- Easier access to more flexible respite care – especially for children and young people
- An improved range and quality of mental health services to provide greater access to people with a mental illness and their carers.

"Our policy especially recognises the needs of young people who require care, and their carers. It is a shocking fact that at least 6,000 young people with disabilities currently live in aged care nursing homes, due to a chronic shortage of supported accommodation for young people", Ms Gilmore said.

"Carers Australia demands that the Federal, State and Territory Governments address the shortage of accommodation for young people with disabilities so they are given care that is appropriate for their age and needs", she said.

"Australia's 2.5 million carers must not be forgotten during this election campaign. Anyone can become a carer – sometimes overnight – and any political party which ignores their needs can be expected to pay the price at the ballot box".

For more information, contact:

Niree Creed

Media
Carers Australia
0418 625595

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NOTE TO EDITORS: CARERS AUSTRALIA FEDERAL ELECTION POLICY IS AVAILABLE AT
www.carersaustralia.com.au