



Federal Budget 2010-11 Analysis

May 2010

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing those Australians who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends with a disability, mental illness or disorder, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail.

Carers Australia believes all carers, regardless of their cultural and linguistic differences, age, disability, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identification and geographical location should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians.

They should be able to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family, social and community life, employment and education. These rights should be mandated in legislation.

Title: Carers Australia 2010-11 Federal Budget Analysis

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In what can be considered one of the most disappointing budgets for carers in many years, this year's Federal Budget has failed to deliver few direct benefits for carers or acknowledge their contribution to Australian society.

The overarching message of this year's Budget prior to announcements was that the government was going to scale back spending with a view to getting the budget back into surplus in a short amount of time. It was referred to as a 'no frills' budget by Treasurer, The Hon Wayne Swan MP.

However, the health system was a big winner on the night – this was in line with anticipated announcements following the COAG meeting. It would seem however, that carers role in the health system remains 'invisible' in government circles.

In his speech to Parliament on budget night (11 May 2010) the Treasurer mentioned carers only once, under the heading *Easing the Cost of Living*. Treasurer Swan stated "in safeguarding the economy and jobs during the global downturn I'm proud we also delivered financial security for families, pensioners and carers."

This comment alone suggests that proponents in the government including the Treasurer, believe they have done enough for carers in recent years. **However, not all carers receive carer income support payments from Centrelink**. This is an important message that we need to make sure government policy and decision makers understand.

So many carers would find this statement to be untrue and misleading for the Australian public. Given the number of carers who were not assisted by the government's increases to carer income support payments announced last budget, and the continued demands placed on all carers to meet the high costs of care, it is a stretch to claim that carers across the country are now 'financially secure'. We also know that financial security is just one aspect of support that carers need, this will not address the ongoing disadvantage faced by carers everyday.

A joint media release for the budget by Jenny Macklin MP and Bill Shorten MP states that "The Rudd Government is delivering on its commitment to support people with a disability, their families and carers, not only now but into the future."

The government missed the opportunity to use this budget as a platform for further significant and much-needed support for carers.

While there have been some strong commitments to change from the government and announcements for carers during the past year such as the major announcement of a National Carer Framework there has been little tangible support.

Carers are tiring of the rhetoric and delaying tactics. The risk for the current government is that they will take this opinion to the polls later this year.

Further reforms to Special Disability Trusts to encourage more people to take up the Trusts on behalf of the person they care for are very encouraging. The following changes will take effect from 1 January 2011

- allowing trust beneficiaries to work for up to seven hours a week without effecting their ability to qualify
- being able to use trust funds to pay for the beneficiary's medical expenses, including private health cover, and maintenance of assets and properties

- allowing up to \$10,000 of spending per financial year on 'discretionary items' that are not related to the care and accommodation needs of the beneficiary to support social participation
- there has also been a commitment to a review in two years time of the amount that can be held in trusts, the amount that can be gifted and those who are able to request audits.

There are a number of other budget measures that may have positive flow-on effects for carers and the people for whom they are caring. In effect, carers may be eligible for some of these initiatives even though they were not designed with carers in mind, or benefit indirectly from the outcomes of these announcements. These are discussed under the relevant portfolios below.

Health and Ageing

Imagine a health and aged care system without family carers

Health

Several hospital improvements announced in the budget, including reduced waiting times for elective surgery and several measures designed to increase the capacity of the health workforce through funding for nursing, GP and specialist doctors and training and placement incentives for health professionals.

These workforce measures also include spending to improve access to after hours medical care and measures to increase the number of GPs and other health professionals in rural and regional Australia.

These measures may make things easier for carers.

Coordinated diabetes care

\$449.2 million over four years to improve the quality and coordination of primary health care services provided to people with diabetes from 1 July 2012.

Aged care

There have been several measures funded with a focus on attracting, retaining and training aged care nurses and funding for a model for nurse practitioners in aged care may benefit carers.

Also research into aged care staffing levels: \$0.5million over two years

Meeting the demand for high-level aged care

\$247.7 million over four years from high-level residential aged care to high-level community aged care to ensure new high-level community aged care places are made available as quickly as possible and assist older people to stay in their own home for as long as possible while accessing care services.

Continuation of funding for Aged Care Assessment Teams and Aged care assessments

While this is not an announcement of new funding, these two measures will ensure the continuation of aged care services.

This includes \$18.6 million over two years from 2010-11 to ensure aged care assessment teams have the capability to undertake an adequate number of assessments in a timely manner to meet the demand for residential aged care and \$15.9 million over two years to continue the Aged Care Assessment Program which provides support to teams across Australia undertaking aged care assessments.

Expansion of access to 'multi-purpose services'

The Government will provide \$122.0 million over four years to establish new, and increase the capacity of existing, multi-purpose services facilities. Up to 286 additional beds are expected to be available by 2012-13. Multi-purpose services provide a combination of services including acute care, residential aged care, community health, home and community care and other health-related services.

Improving access to General Practice and primary health care in aged care facilities

\$98.6 million over five years to support additional primary care services for older Australians in aged care. Funding will be used to target gaps in primary health care services by offering financial incentives to general practitioners, nurses, geriatricians and allied health professionals to provide bulk-billed health services, including call out and regular check up visits, to residents of aged care facilities.

Improving the viability of community care providers

\$10.1 million over four years to increase the viability supplement paid to eligible community care providers from 1 July 2010. This funding will be used to pay community care providers in regional, rural and remote Australia the same incentives that are paid to residential care providers.

Strengthening arrangements for aged care complaints

\$50.6 million over four years to improve complaints handling processes for consumers of aged care services. This measure increases funding for the Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme.

Carers Australia was pleased with the overall outcomes of the report following the review of the Aged Care Complaints system. It was recommended that training in communicating with clients and carers would greatly improve the ability of investigators to examine a wider and more balanced range of evidence that includes the needs of clients and their carers. The report also acknowledged that carers should be more involved throughout the complaints process. We will monitor progress with interest.

Supporting long stay older patients

\$276.4 million over three years from 2011-12 from high care residential aged care places to the State and Territory governments to provide similar levels of care for Long Stay Older Patients (LSOP) in public hospitals. This will cover patients who, after receiving acute medical attention and having been assessed as needing aged care, cannot be discharged until their care arrangements have been finalised. This is not an announcement of new funds.

Reform of roles and responsibilities for Home and Community Care and related programs

\$38.3 million over four years to facilitate the Government taking full funding and policy responsibility from July 2011 for meeting the care needs of people aged 65 and over (50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) in the Home and Community Care program. Victoria and Western Australia have chosen not to participate in this arrangement.

Carers Australia is concerned about this initiative in as much as we are not sure the ramifications of such a move are fully understood by government. We will continue to liaise with DoHA and set out our concerns.

Aged care one-stop shops

\$36.8 million over four years to enable older Australians and their families to more easily access information and assessment for aged care services, through establishing one-stop shops across the country. This will involve a national, integrated aged care system offering information and assessment through telephone and web-based technology, which will assist older Australians to access services in the place that best suits their care needs.

This measure will also enable older Australians to be linked to assessment services, including through the one-stop shops purchasing more complex aged care assessment services.

Do they meet the needs of carers?

Mental health

No funding for carers of people with a mental illness.

Extension of funding for Mental Health Support for Drought-Affected Communities program

\$5.5 million in 2010-11 to continue this mental health measure which supports mental health professionals and community leaders to respond to the psychological impact of drought.

National Health and Hospitals Network additional mental health nurses

\$13.0 million over two years to increase funding for the Mental Health Nurse Incentive program. The program funds community-based general practices, private psychiatric practices and other similar organisations to engage mental health nurses to assist in providing coordinated clinical care for people with severe mental health disorders.

National Health and Hospitals Network expanding the Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre model

\$25.5 million over four years to establish new Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centres (EPPIC) in partnership with states and territories. This measure will build on the EPPIC model currently operating in Victoria. EPPIC provides an integrated and comprehensive psychiatric service to help address the needs of people aged 15-24 with emerging psychotic disorders. Services provided include early intervention and clinical treatment.

National Health and Hospitals Network flexible care packages for patients with severe mental illnesses

\$58.5 million over five years to establish personal multidisciplinary care packages for patients with severe mental illness. The existing *Access to Allied Psychological Services* program will be expanded and enhanced to allow approximately 6,000 patients per year to receive a package of customised treatment.

National Health and Hospitals Network more youth friendly services

\$78.8 million over four years to establish up to 30 new Headspace sites, to provide additional funding to existing sites and expand telephone and web-based mental health services for young people. This investment will support an additional 20,000 young people a year once the new sites are established.

This measure builds on the existing *headspace* program which provides community-based support and assistance to Australians aged 12-25 with, or at risk of, mental illness.

Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Continuation of funding for Family Relationship Services for Carers

\$9.0 million over the four years to 2013-14 to continue the Family Relationship Services for Carers program. This program provides parents and other family members with access to family mediation and counselling services plus information, referrals and support to help make financial, accommodation and care arrangements for their child with a disability.

Services provided through the Family Relationship Services for Carers program are available free of charge and are provided in every State and Territory in Australia.

Continuation of Funding for National Disability Strategy

\$6.2 million over four years to establish a policy coordination and secretariat unit within the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to further develop and implement the National Disability Strategy. The unit will engage stakeholders; develop action plans; establish governance arrangements to negotiate and implement the National Disability Strategy with the States and Territories; and ensure robust reporting on outcomes achieved.

This measure also includes the development of a comprehensive information portal covering disability programs, services and support, which will be provided through australia.gov.au.

Funding for a National Carer Strategy not included.

Employment, Education and Workplace Relations

Disability Employment Services – assistance to job seekers with an intellectual disability

\$7.4 million to fund a two-year trial of a 70 per cent loading on selected service fees, on placement fees and on outcome fees available to Disability Employment Services providers. These loadings will be available to providers who help job seekers with moderate intellectual disability, enabling the delivery of additional support and resources to help those job seekers prepare for and secure sustainable work of more than 15 hours per week.

Disability Employment Services – information technology

\$26.2 million over four years from 2009-10 to fully implement information technology arrangements to support the delivery of the new Disability Employment Services announced in the 2009 budget.

Disability Employment Services – streamlined access to employment assistance

\$0.5 million over two years to pilot new arrangements for certain young people with a disability to access Disability Employment Services. Young people with a disability who access state government transition-to-work programs before entering Disability Employment Services, or who access specialist employment assistance within 12 months of leaving school, will no longer be required to undergo a Job Capacity Assessment before entering Disability Employment Services. This proposal will streamline arrangements for young people with a disability to transition from school to employment assistance.

Job Capacity Assessment – more efficient and accurate assessments for Disability Support Pension and employment services

The Government will improve assessments for disadvantaged job seekers and Disability Support Pension claimants who are currently required to undergo a Job Capacity Assessment to ensure that appropriate employment and income support are provided.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan

The Government will provide \$15.4 million over four years to support the implementation of the ATSI Education Action Plan 2010-2014. The Action Plan will set out an agreed national approach to the Closing the Gap targets through initiatives that aim to strengthen the education outcomes of Indigenous Australians.

Productive Ageing Package

The Government will provide funding of \$43.2 million over five years to help mature age Australians participate in the labour market. Increasing the labour market participation of mature aged workers will be a major contributor to the future of Australia's economic growth and prosperity. The measure includes initiatives to

support mature age workers in select industries and locations to return to the workforce or to start on a new career, or to undertake appropriate training to transition to a supervisory or training role.

Carers Australia will be liaising with the Department to see how mature aged carers whose caring responsibilities may have ended may access this initiative.

School Enrolment and Attendance Trial - continuation

The announcement of \$3.4 million for a one year extension of the School Enrolment Attendance Trail announced in the 2008-09 budget is of concern to Carers Australia. We wrote to the Ministers concerned when this was first announced to seek assurances that young carers and their families would not be penalised.

Carers Australia will continue to liaise with appropriate Ministers to ensure that the families of young carers are exempt from this trial.

Human Services

Additional funding for Jobs and Training Compact – Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership

\$5.5 million over five years to combine the Youth Pathways and Connections programs into one program. This measure aims to assist young people to engage with education and further training, and to improve their ability to make positive life choices.

The measure will fund Centrelink to register and refer up to 6,000 additional young people to the Youth Connection program and make necessary systems changes. Centrelink will be able to assist young people who are most at risk of disengaging from education, family and community by delivering a more comprehensive and holistic service to 13-19 year olds and expand this service nationally.

Secure and sustainable pension reform – additional funding for service delivery

\$14.2 million over five years for Centrelink to implement the reforms under the *Secure and Sustainable Pensions* package which was announced in the 2009-10 Budget.

Veterans Affairs

Preventable Admissions and Improved Community Care program

\$152.7 million over five years for a new preventable admissions and improved community care program to assist veterans with chronic health conditions, such as coronary artery disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and diabetes. This measure will improve the care of veterans with chronic conditions and help reduce the level of unnecessary hospital admissions.

Under this measure, general practitioners will receive incentive payments to design a health care plan, coordinate care and ensure that a holistic approach to the management of chronic conditions is undertaken. General practitioners will be assisted by practice/community nurses who will conduct home visits, coordinate appointments with general practitioners and specialists, as well as assist veterans to self-monitor and self-manage their conditions. Veteran involvement in the program will be voluntary. This measure also includes an expansion of existing services under the Veterans' Home Care program and the introduction of new social support services for veterans with chronic conditions.

Carers Australia will be writing to the Minister to highlight the role of carers in caring for Veterans and that they must be part of the 'health care planning and management team'.

Veterans' Ambulance Travel Funding – changed fee arrangements

no new funding.

The Government will negotiate new fee arrangements with States and Territories for veterans' ambulance travel funding to address the current disparity in charges between States and Territories for these services.

Under this measure, existing Commonwealth funding arrangements for ambulance travel will be replaced with a nationally consistent flat fee for each eligible veteran or dependant.

War Widow/er pension – removal of entitlement for new claimants who enter a de facto relationship

The Government will remove eligibility for the War Widow/ers Pension for people who, before applying for the War Widow/ers Pension, enter a de facto relationship following the death of their veteran partner. War widow/ers who remarry or enter a de facto relationship after claiming a war widow/ers Pension will not lose their entitlement under this measure.

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