

MEDIA RELEASE



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Productivity Commission acknowledges that access to respite for unpaid carers essential to success of NDIS

In recommending improved access to respite for unpaid carers in its report on NDIS Costs, the Productivity Commission has acknowledged that: "Informal care, and the ability to call upon informal carers, is a vital part of the supports provided by the NDIS. Without respite services, the sustainability and success of the scheme are imperilled."

"The Commission's Inquiry confirmed what Carers Australia, providers of respite services, and independent reviews of NDIS performance have been highlighting for some considerable time. This is that respite for carers is not being properly incorporated into NDIS planning processes and carers are losing the ability to take much needed breaks from providing substantial amounts of care", said Ara Cresswell, the CEO of Carers Australia.

"While family and friend carers undoubtedly benefit from the additional support offered to those they care for, there is a wealth of evidence that many are still providing the level of personal care they have always done, or that their caring role has not significantly diminished", said Ms Cresswell.

"If carers burn out, the support they provide will have to be replaced by much higher levels of paid care, which will have a substantial impact on NDIS costs.

"Indeed, given the high level of workforce shortages in disability care, there is a question over whether replacement care would even be available regardless of cost.

"The report emphasises the challenges confronting aged carers, many of whom will struggle to go on without additional support to meet their own needs in their caring role."

In particular the Commission recommends that it should be made clear to participants and NDIS planners that respite care can and, where appropriate, should be included in the individualised support packages of those they care for. It also needs to be made clear that services such as short-term accommodation for the person with a disability and additional in-home care are available for respite purposes.

In addition, the Commission recommends that NDIA prices for short-term accommodation need to be reviewed, as many providers of these services are unable to offer them under the current NDIS pricing arrangements.

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