

MEDIA RELEASE



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Serious shortage of respite accommodation in aged care homes revealed

Carers Australia calls on the Government to increase subsidies for respite care in residential aged care facilities so that family and friend carers can take a break from caring when required. Other types of respite also need to be made more readily available, including cottage style accommodation for overnight and weekend breaks.

“We have conducted a national survey of organisations that help carers access respite services, which shows an increasing difficulty for carers to find respite care when they need a break from the demands of providing around the clock care, or even to deal with their own health or other family issues,” said Carers Australia CEO, Ara Cresswell.

Across Australia, 74% of respondents reported high or very high demand for emergency respite, while the level of high demand for pre-planned respite accommodation was 88%. Nearly seventy per cent reported that both emergency and pre-planned respite were difficult or very difficult to access. Despite undertaking often exhaustive efforts to identify respite opportunities, 35% of respondents said they were only able to find respite beds some of the time.

“Caring for the aged can be an exhausting, time-consuming, and emotionally wearing task – especially for those carers who are aged themselves,” said Ms Cresswell.

“For many the opportunity to take a break is vital to their ability to continue providing care at home. They will also need to find replacement care for the person they care for if they become ill themselves or have other demands which need attention and take them away from home.



“If a carer needs to be away for more than a night or two, respite accommodation for those they care for in an aged residential care facility is often their only option.

“Daily subsidies paid to residential aged care providers by the Government are much higher for permanent residents and for residents convalescing after an illness or operation than for respite care, so there is a disincentive to make short-term stays available for respite care. The difference is even sharper for people with high care needs, including people with advanced dementia.

“As well as higher subsidies to encourage aged care providers to offer respite, our research indicates a high, unfulfilled demand for overnight and weekend respite, particularly in cottage-style accommodation. Cottage-style respite is ideal because it offers home-like surroundings and can feel more like a holiday for the person with care needs.

“The recent *Aged Care Legislated Review 2017* recommended that the Government review existing respite arrangements to ensure there is an adequate supply of residential respite with equitable access. We would expect that the outcomes of this survey be taken into account in that review,” said Ms Cresswell.

Deloitte Access Economics calculated that the replacement cost of the free care provided by family and friends amounted to \$60.3 billion in 2015. Carers make a significant contribution to the economy. They both need and deserve to be supported.

The Carers Australia report, *Improving access to aged residential respite care*, is available on the Carers Australia website [via this link](#).

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