

MEDIA RELEASE



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New national approach to carer support services announced

Minister for Social Services, The Hon Dan Tehan MP, today announced that the government has approved the long-awaited introduction of a new national approach to carer support services.

“This is a most welcome announcement,” said Ara Cresswell, CEO of Carers Australia.

“For some years now Carers Australia and other carer service providers have been working with the Department of Social Services to design a more integrated and nationally consistent model of delivering services to Australia’s 2.8 million family and friend carers. While not all carers need special support services in their own right to meet the challenges they face in their caring role, a great many do.

“Over one third of carers who are the main source of support to one or more people with disability, chronic or terminal illness, mental health challenges or who are frail aged, provide 40 hours or more of care a week and a third of such carers also have a disability of some kind themselves.

“The new integrated carer support services model announced today will extend the range and accessibility of carer supports and address some of the fragmentation of existing services, which have been a by-product of accumulated historical changes to programs and of aged care reform and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

“While some elements of the model still need to be fully developed and articulated, we support the overall design,” said Ms Cresswell.

“However, we have made it very clear that we don’t want the implementation of the new model to be rushed and that there needs to be proper transition arrangements so that existing services don’t suddenly disappear through the lack of transitional funding certainty, leaving significant gaps in support for carers while the new model gets up to speed.



“In order to provide the additional funding needed to move to the new national model of carer support, the Government will also means test the Carer Allowance, which is currently \$127.10 per fortnight. The Allowance, the associated Carer Supplement and the (Child) Health Care Card only will no longer be available to carers from households with an annual income of a quarter of a million dollars or more. This arrangement will come into effect during September.

“The Government has calculated that the change will affect about one per cent of Carer Allowance recipients, with all the savings from this measure invested into carer services.

“We appreciate that when people have become accustomed to receiving a benefit, they can feel aggrieved when it is taken away. However, the income threshold is very generous compared to other pensions and allowances, reflecting the Government’s recognition that caring can add substantially to the usual costs of maintaining a household.

“And carers, whatever their income, can benefit from the improved services available to them to support their own health and wellbeing and their capacity to sustain care.”

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