

Media Release



Carers Australia is the national peak body for carers. Our vision is an Australia that values and supports the contribution that carers make both to the people they care for and to the community as a whole.

19th August 2015

Invisible Workforce: \$60.3 billion a year labour of love

A new report has found Australians will provide \$60.3 billion in unpaid care this year alone looking after family members and friends who are aged, chronically ill or have a disability.

According to the Deloitte Access Economics Report, *The Economic Value of Informal Care in Australia in 2015*, released today by Carers Australia, the need for carers is at an all-time high with one-in-eight Australians providing informal care and demand for carers doubling supply in some areas.

The report warns of an ever-widening carer gap and points to modelling that shows that by 2025, only 42 per cent of people with a severe disability who are aged over 65 years and not living in residential care will have access to an unpaid family and friend carer.

According to unpaid carer, Helen Johnson, the Report highlights the dilemma that almost all Australians will have to address at some point in their lives.

"Whether everyone knows it or not, all Australians are only a few degrees of separation from a carer, if they are not already themselves caring for a family member or friend. During their lifetime, every Australian has a high chance of either being a carer, knowing a carer or needing a carer," she said.

"I started caring for my son over 21 years ago and in that time the demand for unpaid care has grown considerably, especially with the ageing of the population. This demand is set to continue to increase and community attitudes towards carers must grow alongside.

"Services and supports provided to carers by Federal and State Governments have improved, but more is still needed. The value in Reports like this one is that they bring the amazing value that unpaid carers provide to the country into sharp focus."

The Report highlights the need for a concerted and sustained policy effort to respond to the needs of 2.86 million Australians who act as informal carers, including 825,000 who are primary providers of unpaid care.

The Report also found that approximately 78,000 children under the age of 15 are required to deliver informal care to family members due to a lack of external support.

CEO of Carers Australia, Ara Cresswell, will tell a launch event in Canberra's Parliament House today that, "Carers do a lot of heavy lifting that often goes unrecognised. In fact, the report values the provision of informal care in Australia at more than a billion dollars a week.

“We have an ageing population and an increasing number of people with disabilities, illness and disease who require care at home.”

The Report proposes a number of policy options to reduce the burden on carers and improve support services across Australia’s welfare sector, including:

- Greater flexibility in working arrangements to accommodate workers’ care responsibilities and employment preferences;
- Improvement in access to carer support services, such as respite care, to alleviate the impact of caring;
- Further investigation of carer perceptions of the costs and quality of formal care in order to encourage an optimal mix of formal and informal care provision; and
- Adapting the formal care sector to better meet the needs of older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

“This Report allows Carers Australia to quantify the true value of carers to the community while highlighting areas that require focused attention. We are pleased to be working with the Government to develop detailed and robust carer policies for the future,” Ms Cresswell added.

About Carers Australia

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing Australia’s carers, advocating on behalf of Australia’s carers to influence policies and services at a national level. It works collaboratively with partners and its member organisations, the Network of state and territory Carers Associations, to deliver a range of essential national carer services.

About Helen Johnson

Helen Johnson lives in Traralgon, Victoria and cares for her son, Ben – one of only 600 people worldwide with Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome. Ben was born with this incredibly rare syndrome and was also diagnosed with severe Autism in 1997. Ben's diagnosis has categorised him as having a severe and profound disability and he is fully dependent on both Helen and her husband 24/7 to help provide full-time care.

Sadly, Ben also became a paraplegic in 2009 after an 'unexplained' post-operative complication. To date Ben has had 54 surgical procedures, all of them in Melbourne, 180km from the family home.

Helen also cared for her father who lived in the family home for 7 years and was fully bed-bound for 2 of those 7 years before passing away from a chronic illness (emphysema & Pulmonary Obstructive Airways Disease - P.O.A.D) in Sept 2010.

In order to provide her family with greater financial stability, Helen also works at Westpac on a part-time basis and greatly values the work flexibility that her employer provides, and that she sorely needs to be able to support Ben when required.

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