

MEDIA RELEASE



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Research into support for older people reveals that Australia falls short of comparable countries

'The recently released Flinders University *Review of International Systems for Long-term Care of Older People* commissioned by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety is quite an eye-opener,' said Mary Reid, Interim CEO of Carers Australia.

'Compared to a number of European countries, and even to the USA on some counts, Australia's performance is at best lacklustre against a number of indicators. Australia's performance against integration with other services, such as health, is not high, and we are toward the bottom of the range of staffing levels and nurse workforce in both residential and home care.

'In one 11 country survey, Australia had the highest proportion of respondents experiencing emotional distress,' said Ms Reid.

Of particular interest to Carers Australia are the supports offered to family and friend carers. A point made throughout the report is that family and friend carers make a major contribution to the sustainability of long-term aged care. In Australia the contribution of family and friend carers to the economy was valued at over \$60 billion in 2015.

However, against a number of measures, the level of support available to those carers in Australia falls short of other countries.

'While a Carer Payment is available through the social security system for those whose caring role prevents them from taking on employment, the support for employed carers is comparatively poor,' said Ms Reid.

'Under the Fair Work Act, 10 days Carers Leave is available to employees who have worked for an employer for over a year. But these 10 days are taken out of the Personal Leave entitlement available to all employees, including their own sick leave. In many nations, while the length of leave varies, extended leave is available to carers for much longer periods of time without endangering their job.'



In addition to identifying better financial assistance and better leave provisions for carers as areas for improvement, the report and its companion piece, *Review of Innovative Models of Aged Care*, canvasses a more flexible provision of services than that currently available to allow carers to take a break from caring.

‘We hope the areas of potential improvement identified in the Flinders University reports will inform the outcomes of the Royal Commission,’ said Ms Reid. ‘They will certainly inform Carers Australia’s advocacy over the coming year.’

The two Flinders University reports are available at:

<https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/Pages/default.aspx>

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