

# MEDIA RELEASE



21 May 2020

## Survey of family and friend carers reveals them doing it very tough during COVID-19 pandemic

“A survey of family and friend carers conducted by the Caring Fairly campaign has revealed that, while the coronavirus and its consequences have impacted negatively on many Australians, family and friend carers of people with disability, mental illness, chronic illness and the frail aged have faced a very high level of challenges to their finances and wellbeing,” said Mary Reid, Interim CEO of Carers Australia.

The survey, which was conducted over two weeks in April and May, reveals that:

- 42% have lost some/all of their regular income since the COVID-19 outbreak
- 40% say that they've had to work fewer hours because of the need to provide extra support to the person they care for, whereas about half that number have had to work fewer hours because their employers initiated a reduction in work hours
- 12% reported losing their job since COVID-19
- 86% of carers are now spending more money on livings costs, with the most common increases being grocery shopping (96%), cleaning (49.5%) and medication (40.5%)
- 60% said they had lost some or all of the supports for the person they care for and almost half reported losing supports for themselves
- 81% said their mental health had deteriorated since the COVID-19 pandemic and 88% had experienced increased stress in their role as a carer.

Just under 30 percent of respondents were reliant on the Carer Payment for basic income support.

The Government has made it clear that the \$550 per fortnight Coronavirus Supplement, which has been made available to many income support recipients, will not be added to pensions such as the Carer Payment and the Disability Support Pension. This is on the grounds that the supplement has mainly been introduced for people who have unexpectedly lost their jobs as a result of the lock-down and need assistance to tide them over a significant adjustment period.



“While it is true that people on pensions are generally not in employment, or only partially, this does not mean that changes to their financial situation does not impact heavily on them. It also needs to be noted that 12 percent of respondents on the Carer Payment have lost what work they did have, and a further 64 percent have had to reduce their hours, either because their employer does not have enough work for them, or because they have had to put in more hours of care with the loss of service support,” said Ms Reid.

“Against this background we recommend that, at the very least, the Government seriously considers adding a third \$750 lump sum payment to support people on the Carer Payment.”

A summary report from the Caring Fairly survey is available [here](#).

**For media enquiries please contact Samara McCann on (02) 6122 9917 or 0428 948 415**