

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## Carers must be recognised by Select Committee on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

Carers must not be forgotten by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (the Committee), says the national peak body for Australia's 2.65 million unpaid carers.

Acting CEO of Carers Australia, Kelly Gourlay, said, "While we welcome the Committee's [interim report](#), it is important that carers are not overlooked in the final report as carers have among the lowest levels of wellbeing of any group in Australia, even before the impact of COVID-19 added another level of complexity."

Carers Australia in collaboration with the National Carer Network are strong advocates for carer inclusion in services delivered to those they care for – whether these be clinical services or other types of support services.

"Carers need support for their own mental health, and consumers of mental health services may also have care responsibilities. All consumers of health and social services need to be asked about their care responsibilities and how this may impact on their mental health," said Ms Gourlay.

The interim report identifies a number of key themes which the Committee feels need further examination as the inquiry progresses, including workforce, coordination and funding of services, accessibility and affordability, and early intervention.

"We encourage the Committee to consider carers and their needs within these themes as they move into the second stage of the inquiry. This includes the carers' role in contributing to the recovery of individuals with mental illness specifically, where the wellbeing of people with mental illness and their families and carers are interdependent." said Ms Gourlay.

Carers of individuals with a mental illness often do not have the same visibility as carers of people in other circumstances, and this can result in additional obstacles to accessing recognition and support. Our long-standing concerns for mental health carers are reflected in a [submission](#) to the Committee and our [response](#) to the Productivity Commission's Mental Health Inquiry Final report.

Carers Australia was also pleased to hear Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, David Coleman, highlight the critical need for a whole-of-government and whole-of-



community approach to mental health on release of the National Suicide Prevention Adviser's Final Advice yesterday.

"We applaud the advice which calls for a refocused approach that does not wait for people to seek help, but rather strengthen and build on currently available supports to expand reach to where people interact," said Ms Gourlay.

"We stand ready to engage with the Committee as the peak body for unpaid carers during the next steps of this important process, and will continue to highlight the invaluable role carers make in Australia to the people they care for and the wider community."

#### **About Carers Australia and the National Carer Network**

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing Australia's carers, advocating to influence policies and services at a national level. The National Carer Network, which consists of Carers NSW, Carers ACT, Carers Victoria, Carers Tasmania, Carers SA, Carers WA, Carers NT, and Carers Queensland, deliver a range of essential carer services across states and territories.

#### **About carers**

An informal, unpaid carer is a family member or friend that cares for someone that has a disability, chronic or life-limiting illness, is frail aged, has a mental health illness, alcohol or other drug related issue. Informal carers are distinct from paid support workers who are colloquially also called carers but are fully employed and remunerated with all the benefits of employment. Conversely, family carers perform their caring duties without remuneration

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