

MEDIA RELEASE



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Calls for GPs to help improve carer wellbeing this National Carers Week

Carers Australia are asking General Practitioners and other medical professionals to help improve carer health and wellbeing through social prescribing.

A [new factsheet](#) about social prescribing from Carers Australia, which is a part of the National Carers Week 2021 Caring for Carers resources, provides information for GPs and consumers about social prescribing and its benefits for unpaid carers.

Social prescribing is a personalised approach in general practice that supports the needs of consumers and carers who are experiencing social or emotional concerns which are impacting on their health.

Some forms of social prescribing include engaging in creative activities, learning new skills, exercising, and being provided with information on financial supports, community health and peer support.

Carers Australia CEO, Liz Callaghan, said “Many carers find caregiving a positive experience, however we can’t ignore the toll it has on carers. They experience negative impacts on their social life, employment and finances – we also know that carers have a higher risk of having a chronic illness compared to non-carers.”

“Social prescribing can contribute to building connected and inclusive communities, ensuring the sustainability of the caring role and the health system.”

While evidence on the benefits of social prescribing is still emerging, initiatives from the United Kingdom have proven to be effective at tackling health inequalities, reducing GP appointments and emergency room visits.

Tim Anfilogoff works for the National Health Service in Hertfordshire, England, and is also a Trustee of Carers UK. Mr Anfilogoff is also a member of the National SP Network Steering Group and has been involved in ground breaking work with carers and social prescribing in the UK. He has been working with Carers Australia to promote social prescribing for carers in Australia.

“Often there is help for carers in our communities that can massively improve the quality of their lives by addressing loneliness, lack of understanding of government supports, and lack of understanding of how to manage their own or cared for person’s health issues,” said Mr Anfilogoff.



“We found identifying a carers’ champion in each General Practice who can help the practice identify carers and also provide information to those carers about local supports can make a real difference. GPs don’t have time to research the links and often don’t see the ‘hidden’ carer.”

In the Herts work that Mr Anfilogoff was involved in, it was possible to see evidence of reduced risk of depression in carers through ‘socially prescribed’ solutions. The key element was usually the social prescribing mantra of ‘what matters to me’ and showed that even the smallest person-centred solutions can change years of feeling abandoned and unsupported.

“Doctors and other medical professionals have the potential to be fantastic advocates for social prescribing to carers, as they are the ones who see carers the most frequently,” said Ms Callaghan.

“We hope that this National Carers Week, these health professionals will answer our call and begin those important conversations with carers by using our Caring for Carers resources.”

National Carers Week is an opportunity to recognise, celebrate and thank Australia’s unpaid carers for all the incredible work they do.

As part of this year’s ‘Millions of Reasons to Care’ theme, Carers Australia has created a range of Caring for Carers resources to empower the broader community to identify and support the carers in their lives.

The Caring for Carers resources can be found by visiting carersweek.com.au and includes information for educational institutions, GPs and medical professionals, and workplaces.

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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