

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## Who cares for carers?

Carers Australia and the National Carer Network are calling on all political parties to commit to addressing the needs of Australia's 2.65 million carers ahead of the Federal Election in 2022 as outlined in a Federal Election Platform and 2022-23 Budget submission.

Carers Australia Acting CEO, Melanie Cantwell said, "Anyone at any time can become a carer – it is rarely a choice. We are seeking a commitment in the election by all parties to lay the foundation to appropriately recognise and value the carers who underpin our health, aged care, disability care and social support systems. These commitments should include economic and financial security, equitable access to respite care, strengthening recognition and accountability within government for carers, and committing to individual advocacy and navigation support for carers."

Thirteen years on from release of the 2009 *Who Cares...?: Report on the inquiry into Better Support for Carers by the House of Representatives Committee* carers are still not adequately embedded within reform processes, highlighted by the work of the Aged Care Royal Commission, Productivity Commission inquiry into Mental Health and Disability Royal Commission.

"The demands on carers are only going to increase. We want to work with all parties to embed carers within reform processes now and into the future so that this demand can be met, while at the same time carers are able to look after their own wellbeing and enjoy the same benefits and opportunities as all Australians," Ms Cantwell said.

The first National Carer Wellbeing Survey undertaken in 2021 revealed Australia's carers were two and a half times more likely to have low wellbeing than the general population, and more than half of carers surveyed (52.1%) fear they may not be able to continue their caring role.

"Carers have much higher psychological distress compared to the average Australian, yet there are not significant targeted federal government funds to support carers' mental health and wellbeing. The same survey revealed that only 19% of carers could easily organise support from a family member or friend if they were unwell or needed a break. This has only worsened with COVID impacting on availability of those alternate support people."

"This means there is an urgent need to address access to respite care for carers. Equitable and timely respite would mean carers could, if they chose to, increase their participation in paid work or education, delivering better outcomes for community and government as they maintain and thrive in their caring role," said Ms Cantwell.

"We also want to see specific mental health and wellbeing supports funded for carers in the 2022-23 Budget, including the ability for the National Carers Network to appropriately address local needs and gaps through tailored and flexible services and activities. This is essential during the ongoing pandemic

and recovery, and to supplement Carer Gateway initiatives, and COVID-19 mental health supports that are not carer-specific.”

While the *Carer Recognition Act 2010* (Commonwealth) formally acknowledges the valuable social and economic contribution of carers in Australia, the last National Carers Strategy lapsed in 2014.

“Recognition of carers in providing support and care is even more crucial in the ongoing pandemic and for the recovery processes to follow, and must focus on carer reform across ministerial portfolios including education, employment, health, aged care, disability care, and digital literacy.”

“This is why we are calling for Government to name a Minister for Carers to lead a whole-of-government approach to carer recognition, inclusion, and support, as well as a Commissioner for Carers to lead development of a new National Carers Strategy,” Ms Cantwell said.

The Carers Australia 2022 Federal Election Platform is [available here](#) and 2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission [available here](#).

### **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 who has a disability, chronic or life-limiting illness, is frail aged, has a mental illness, alcohol or other drug related issue. Informal carers are distinct from paid support workers who are colloquially also called carers but are employed and remunerated with all the benefits of employment. Conversely, family or friend carers perform their caring duties without remuneration.

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