

MEDIA RELEASE



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First Vice President of Carers Australia reflects on 30 years of National Carers Week

Did you know the 30th annual National Carers Week starts this Sunday 16 October 2022? In the lead-up to this important celebration, Carers Australia was lucky enough to talk to someone who helped organise the very first National Carers Week.

Ally Dench became a carer when her son Rodney was born with Cerebral Palsy, and suddenly found herself having to fight to have her voice heard about her son's needs as well as her own. Her drive to speak up for her family led her to help start National Carers Week in 1992. She would go on to become the first Vice President of Carers Australia, which was then known as the National Carers Association.

"Carers save us millions so there are millions of reasons to care for those that care. Often primary carers are the forgotten ones. This happens to so many primary carers today and happened to me when I became the primary carer for my son 35 years ago," said Ms Dench. "We were often told what we could have, rather than being listened to about what was really needed to enable us to care for our son and function as a "normal family" – whatever a normal family is!"

"Over 30 years ago, I attended a carers' respite conference in Queensland to speak up about this. I wanted to be heard so I could get support to be able to care for my son. It was at this conference I put my hand up to be on a Steering Committee to help establish a National Carers Association and became a voice and conduit for other forgotten primary carers," said Ms Dench.

Ms Dench found the opportunity to create positive change for carers was rewarding, formative, and empowering. "My experience of being involved with the National Carers Association enabled me to achieve my goal of being a full and equal partner in my son's care, not just a mere recipient of services," said Ms Dench. "I had much to offer the then 'new' National Carers Association by providing a grassroots perspective in telling our story of what it was like to be primary carers for our son."

The theme of National Carers Week 2022 is 'Millions of Reasons to Care' which highlights the importance of recognising the diverse experiences, contributions and needs of carers like Ms Dench.

"I am so grateful for having had this phenomenal experience that set me on a trajectory to where I am today, and instilled in me hope that positive change to improve people's lives can come from collective advocacy through a national association such as Carers Australia," said Ms Dench.



This National Carers Week, events will be held all over the country to support, celebrate and advocate for carers from Sunday 16 to Saturday 22 October 2022. There are millions of reasons to care about carers, and millions of ways to get involved in #nationalcarersweek. Find out more at www.carersweek.com.au

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

Carers Australia uses the term ‘carer(s)’ as defined by the Commonwealth [Carer Recognition Act 2010](#). The term should not be used loosely and without context to describe a paid care worker, volunteer, foster carer, or a family member or friend who is not a carer.

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

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