

MEDIA RELEASE



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Recognition of unpaid carers finally in the spotlight

Carers Australia applauds the announcement of an [Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers](#) by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs.

"Carers are an integral part of Australia's health, mental health, aged care, disability support and social services systems," said Alison Brook, CEO of Carers Australia.

"While this has been identified consistently in reform processes including independent reviews, Royal Commissions, and Productivity Commission and Parliamentary inquiries, carers still do not have their rights and needs adequately embedded within associated reforms."

The [Carer Recognition Act 2010](#) was introduced following the House of Representatives' [Inquiry into better support for carers](#) in 2009, which identified the fundamental importance of adequately recognising carers and that reform was needed to effect meaningful change.

"While the 2010 Act formally acknowledges the valuable social and economic contribution of carers in Australia, carers continue to be mentioned or considered generally in relation to 'consumers, their families and carers', without recognition of carers' specific needs, or the term is used when referring to paid care workers, which further impacts on their recognition," said Ms Brook.

"We thank the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, for referring this to the Committee and taking action to address ongoing issues with carer recognition in legislation."

"It is pleasing to see that the new Inquiry's Terms of Reference appear broader than simply a definition of 'who is a carer'. True recognition and the appropriate policy and service response that follow require looking at the diversity of caring, issues related to financial security, the economic value of carers and the broader reform agenda across portfolios."

"This is also an opportunity to review how carers are potentially affected by other legislation, both national and state and territory based, including human rights and anti-discrimination legislation, industrial relations, and those related to service delivery such as the NDIS and aged care."

In its interactions with the Inquiry, Carers Australia will also highlight the importance of including processes for assessing the impact of carer-focused legislation and policy, monitoring compliance and the need for a mechanism for carers to raise grievances or complaints.

"We encourage carers to make their voices heard," said Ms Brook.

"We will work with the National Carers Network, our members in each state and territory, to help carers share their lived experiences within the Terms of Reference, and help with submissions to the Inquiry over the coming months."

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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