

MEDIA RELEASE



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AIHW data: carers 'overwhelmed'

Significant numbers of carers of people living with dementia report feeling overwhelmed Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data shows, strengthening the case for improved respite services for unpaid carers and those they care for, says Carers Australia CEO Joanna Cave.

The AIHW survey released today: Living with Dementia Carer Survey: perspectives from Australian carers supporting someone living with dementia, highlighted statistics that will be startling for many Australians, Ms Cave said.

"Today's data shows more than 70 per cent of female unpaid carers feel overwhelmed by their caring responsibilities, while 61 per cent of men feel the same. More than 60 per cent of respondents said they did not have enough time for personal care or social activities, while seven out of 10 women and six out of 10 of men reported low wellbeing.

"In addition, the data shows carers have fair to poor health, deteriorating relationships with family (47 per cent) and find friends avoid them when they are caring (32 per cent). More than a third of women reported they often or always felt lonely."

Carers Australia CEO Joanna Cave said the survey added to the evidence base on the pressures unpaid carers are often under and called for Australia to do more to support unpaid carers.

"One area where Australia could do better, is respite services. We know carers often struggle to access respite for short breaks, even though these are essential circuit breaker services for carers feeling burnt out.

"For many other unpaid carers respite services are hard to find in their local area and where they do exist aren't appropriate or are too expensive. These services are not 'nice to haves', they are essential to the wellbeing of the person being cared for, and their carer. We need to do better.

"Carers Australia joined Dementia Australia earlier this month to call on the Australian Government to conduct the first independent review of Commonwealth funded respite services in 30 years. We need to understand what's available, its quality, appropriateness and affordability to really know how to plan for the future.

Ms Cave said the AIHW data showed informal carers were managing significant caring responsibilities.

"Nearly one-third of participants spent more than 70 hours a week caring for someone with dementia and around half of carers provided 40 hours or more care each week. While over half of respondents were retired, almost a third were also holding down paid employment and also caring.



"That's a huge amount of work alongside paid employment, yet these unpaid carers turn up day after day to help out family and friends. As a society we need to recognise these Australians and the role they play in supporting our health and community services. And we need to do more to care for them," Ms Cave said.

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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 and Carers Queensland that deliver a range of essential carer services across states and territories.