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Dementia Australia and Carers Australia call for urgent review of respite care

Dementia Australia and Carers Australia are calling for Federal Government leadership and investment in an independent national review of respite care services, warning that carers are struggling to access the support they need.

The two organisations have today released a joint position statement highlighting significant challenges with the availability, quality, appropriateness and affordability of Commonwealth-funded respite services, particularly for people living with dementia and their carers.

The joint position statement highlights findings from the 2025 Carer Wellbeing Survey, which found that six in 10 carers reported difficulty finding high-quality respite, nearly 60 per cent reported difficulty in finding available services in their local area, and more than half had difficulty affording respite services and experienced long wait times to access respite.

Dementia Australia Chief Executive Officer Professor Tanya Buchanan said respite care is essential to supporting carers and helping people living with dementia to remain in their homes and communities for longer.

"An estimated 446,500 Australians are living with dementia, many of whom are cared for at home by unpaid carers who repeatedly tell us they cannot access affordable, high-quality respite when they need it the most," Professor Buchanan said.

"Respite is not a luxury. It is a critical support that helps carers manage the physical and emotional impacts of caring, and especially for younger carers, the financial impact.

"When respite is unavailable, inaccessible or unsuitable, carers are more likely to experience burnout and reach crisis points. This increases the risk of unplanned hospitalisation or premature entry into residential aged care for the person receiving care, placing additional strain on individuals, families and the health and aged care systems.

"The last dedicated national review of Commonwealth respite services was nearly 30 years ago. We need to do something about this urgently."

Carers Australia Chief Executive Officer Joanna Cave said respite is beneficial for carers, those they care for and the extended family.

"We know respite is a circuit breaker for unpaid carers, it is an essential service. An independent review of respite care is essential to provide evidence needed to inform and improve respite policy and programs, and better support carers and those they care for."

Dementia Australia Dementia Advocate Jennifer Quilligan, who cares for her husband Saab who is living dementia, said quality respite was essential to helping people living with dementia and their carers to continue living well at home.

"My husband Saab and I both want to stay at home and live joyfully. We don't want dementia to define our day, and respite helps us do that," Jennifer said.

"When Saab spends time with his carer, he has the opportunity to go swimming and to the gym, staying physically active, enjoying a level of independence and community, this time allows me to enjoy my hobbies and refresh my spirit.

"Good respite should include knowing a person's interests and hobbies, needs and joys. It should be person centred and as his full-time carer, I can rest in the knowledge Saab is in the company of a caring trained person ensuring he is safe, respected and engaged."

Unpaid carer Sunil Bhandari, who cares for his elderly father, and supports his mother, said respite gives his mum a break, but also provides community engagement for his dad.

"It gives Mum a chance to go to the shops or meet up with friends and fill her cup, but it also gives Dad a chance to move around his community, to see the neighbours and talk to them, to be seen in his community," Sunil said.

"For the wider family as well, giving Mum that break, giving Dad that broader connection, that means all of our relationships are improved, we all have more space and time for each other. It really makes a significant difference, we've all noticed it."

Dementia Australia and Carers Australia's joint statement can be viewed at dementia.org.au

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Whenever possible please include: 'If this story has prompted any questions or concerns, please call the **National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500** (24 hours a day, seven days a week) or visit **dementia.org.au**.'

Dementia Australia is the source of trusted information, education and services for the estimated more than 446,500 Australians living with dementia, and the more than 1.7 million people involved in their care. We advocate for positive change and support vital research. We are here to support people impacted by dementia, and to enable them to live as well as possible. No matter how you are impacted by dementia or who you are, we are here for you.

For support, please contact the **National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500**. An interpreter service is available. The National Dementia Helpline is funded by the Australian Government. People looking for information can also visit **dementia.org.au**

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.

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When talking or writing about dementia please refer to [Dementia-Friendly Language Guidelines](#).

Note to Editors:

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If this story has prompted any questions or concerns, please call the National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500 (24 hours, 7 days a week) or visit dementia.org.au.