

Carers tell polities what they think in final week of election campaign

750,000 voices are a powerful voting force.

The Carers NSW *Don't be Careless* state election campaign has reached its peak this week, with carers from around the state sending messages en masse to 320 local candidates, demanding to have their issues heard. Some candidates have responded showing general support for the campaign, but the major parties have been noticeably quiet on what they will do to support carers.

Throughout the election campaign, carers from around the state have been telling candidates about their experiences as carers, and their concerns over a lack of funding and services for carers and the people they care for.

"What's the use of promises to carers of support when there are no funds for respite services? Carers save governments thousands of \$ a year yet are unable to get funding to have regular breaks to recharge their batteries. Flat batteries don't work." (carer, Port Stephens)

"I am a disabled carer - I care for my adult brain injured son. I have two concerns: When I die, who will look after my son? As I age, who will look after me?" (carer, Willoughby)

"I have been caring for my husband for nearly 18 months. I am still on the waiting list for services to take some of the stress off me. No funding is all I get told. Huge funding will be needed to look after me when I break down. How short-sighted..." (carer, Castle Hill)

"The amount that young carers miss out on in life is huge! We miss out on jobs, childhoods, social lives - you name it!" (young carer, Northern Tablelands)

"There are approximately 750,000 unpaid family carers in this state and they're determined to have their voices heard," said CEO of Carers NSW Elena Katrakis. "We're speaking up, not only for the carers who *do* have a vote this election but also those who don't. A 2003 survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates there are 90,200 young carers aged under 25 living in NSW."

"The caring role impacts on education, employment, financial security, and health and social wellbeing. At the same time an Access Economics report put the savings to the national economy provided by carers at just under \$42 billion a year. Those savings come at a personal cost and it's being paid by carers."

"The reality is anyone at any time could become a carer. Many of the candidates who have responded have in fact identified as carers themselves," said Ms Katrakis.

"We appreciate the support shown by candidates including Independents, The Greens, Christian Democratic, Family First and Liberal Parties. The question now is what will the major parties actually do for carers if elected? As one carer put it: 'Carers don't want you to just sympathise with their stories, they want you to take action to make a difference.'"

To see the key election issues and for more information on the *Don't Be Careless* campaign, go to www.dontbecareless.org.au

Media contact: Nina Olle, 0409 823 134 / nina.olle@me.com

Go to www.DontBeCareless.org.au

No government funds or donations have been used to finance the Carers NSW 2011 State Election campaign.

**NSW STATE
ELECTION
2011**

