



Macquarie Group
Foundation



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Carers New South Wales is the peak organisation for 750,000 people of all ages providing care for family members or friends with a disability, mental illness, chronic condition or who is frail aged.

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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JOIN IN A NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON *ETHICS of CARING IN A GOOD SOCIETY*

On Saturday 6th September, Carers NSW, Macquarie Group Foundation and St James Ethics Centre will launch an online survey, conducted by St James Ethics Centre, to continue the national conversation around the ethics of caring in Australia. Experts state that the current caring scenario is not sustainable with a likely shortfall in the number of people available to provide care. Under current projections, the increasing demand for carers will affect the current workforce shortage, with workers of all types experiencing the challenge of balancing the demands of work, family and caring responsibilities. The survey aims to reveal what Australians think about this and related issues.

April 2007 saw Carers NSW, with partners Macquarie Group Foundation and St James Ethics Centre, launch this world first research project titled: *'Who Cares?' The Ethics of Caring in a Good Society: national conversation, national action*. Australia has an increasing number of people of all ages needing care. There is an ageing population and an increasingly aged carer population. It is a worldwide trend. However, no nation other than Australia has engaged in a national conversation across all sectors of the community to determine the way forward.

This world-first research project, supported by the Macquarie Group Foundation, has the potential to influence and shape this growing caring sector, not only nationally, but also internationally.

At present, employers are experiencing a workforce shortage – not least in the area of skilled workers. At the same time, many people are faced with the realities of becoming carers. Whether through chronic illness, car accident, disability or aging someone they love needs care.

People become carers without planning - it happens to anyone, anytime when a family member or friend has a child with a disability, is involved in a serious car accident, becomes physically or mentally ill, disabled, or frail aged. Many Australians will become carers at some time in their lives. The conversation is not just for carers however - **all** Australians are invited to get online and contribute their views on what is a good society, what would caring look like in a good society and how Australians want to deal with the issues around caring now and into the future.

Laraine Toms, President of Carers NSW, said carers are being faced with inflexible work commitments and high costs of formal care, or no available formal care at all. *"With employers*

facing a skills shortage can they afford to have skilled carers leaving the workforce because they have no choice other than to care? Is it right that families have no choices because there is no formal care available? Is it right that families have to forgo superannuation in order to care?'

Julie White, Head of the Macquarie Group Foundation, said the project was an important step to delivering the support carers needed to look after their loved ones. *"Carers in our society often live under great emotional and financial stress and can feel extremely isolated,"* she said. *"This study will look into the issues affecting carers, collate the necessary information and in the longer term inform policy development in this critical area."*

Dr Simon Longstaff, Executive Director of The St James Ethics Centre said *"The 'Who Cares?' project will include the following phases: to research nationally what fundamental values and principles might inform the community's idea of what makes for a good society and to stimulate a conversation about how these values and principles should inform our response to the opportunities and challenges of caring. The opportunity to participate is open to anyone, all options are open to discussion; all points of view are welcome."*

The 'Who Cares?' findings will highlight what the Australian community believes the future for caring should look like, and will lay the foundations to inform government, families, and the community at large.

The national conversation so far has involved a diversity of people across the country, asking, in over 50 focus groups, *"What is a good society? What is caring? Whose responsibility is it to care? What does caring look like in a good society?"*

The online survey is informed by the research findings from the focus groups.

The online survey questionnaire available to all is accessible through the St James Ethics Centre website www.ethics.org.au

Media Enquiries

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To learn more about carers visit www.carersnsw.asn.au For information and support for carers call the Carer Line on 1800 242 636.

About Carers NSW Inc.

Carers New South Wales is the peak organisation for 750,000 people of all ages providing care for family members or friends with a disability, mental illness, chronic condition or who are frail in NSW.

About The Macquarie Group Foundation

The Macquarie Group Foundation – the philanthropic arm of the Macquarie Group – has been providing support to community programs for more than 35 years. In the year to 31 March 2008, the Macquarie Group Foundation, together with Macquarie Group staff efforts, contributed more than \$23 million to over 800 community organisations around the world.

About St James Ethics Centre

St James Ethics Centre is a fully independent, not-for-profit organisation which provides a non-judgemental forum for the promotion and exploration of ethics. The Ethics Centre's mission is to encourage and assist individuals and organisations to include the ethical dimension in their daily lives, and thereby help to create a better world. www.ethics.org.au