

Carers Week Fact Sheet



Background to Carers Week

Carers Week is a national, annual week that celebrates and acknowledges carers.

This year's national theme is 'Anyone, Anytime', acknowledging that anyone at any time can become a carer.

Carers Week is a time when many carers, support groups and community organisations across the country hold events which provide them with some time out from their caring role and a chance to socialise with other carers. In NSW, Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Family and Community Services, provides grants for over 340 such events, distributed through Carers NSW.

Carers NSW

Carers NSW is the peak organisation for carers in New South Wales.

It is a non-government, non-profit, non-political organisation incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act (NSW), governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

Carers NSW is part of a national Network of Carers Associations and work collaboratively to lead change and action for carers.

Background on carers

Who are carers?

A carer is any individual who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug and alcohol dependencies, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail.

There are approximately 2.6 million carers in Australia, with around 850,000 carers in New South Wales. (ABS 2010)

What do carers do?

Each care situation is unique. Carers may care for a few hours a week or all day every day. Some carers need to assist with tasks of daily living, and spend their days feeding, bathing, dressing, toileting, transferring or administering medications. Others care for people who are fairly independent but need supervision or help with their finances and transport. Carers also provide emotional support day in and day out for some of the most vulnerable, isolated members of our community.

Impacts of caring

Social isolation

Carers often miss out on important social relationships, including those associated with work, recreation and leisure pursuits, which leaves them feeling very isolated.

Carers are more likely than the general population to have little face-to-face contact with friends or relatives outside the household, especially when caring for someone with high level care needs (Australian Institute of Family Studies and FaHCSIA 2007).

Financial Disadvantage

Caring responsibilities can adversely affect carers' financial situations. There can be a drop in income if a carer has to give up work to become a full-time carer. Most carers are on low incomes and have no opportunity to accumulate or preserve superannuation or any other savings.

- 42% of all carers of workforce age are not in the labour force versus 32% of the total population (ABS 2010).

Carers' health and wellbeing

A national survey of carers health and wellbeing (Carers Australia, Australian Unity, and Deakin University 2007) revealed:

- Carers have the lowest levels of wellbeing of any Australian group
- Over half reported some level of depression, with one third found to be severely or extremely depressed
- More than one third of carers are experiencing severe or extreme stress
- Caring does not get easier with time
- Caring compounds the effect of any other factor that leads to reduced wellbeing
- Any level of consistent, daily, immediate caring responsibility is sufficient to severely damage wellbeing
- Wellbeing decreases as the number of hours spent caring increases
- The presence of a person in the household who requires care severely compromises the wellbeing of other family members, whether they have primary carer responsibility or not.

The future of caring

- The population is ageing. The percentage of the Australian population aged over 85 will increase from 1.5% to 5% of the total population by 2044 (Productivity Commission 2005).

The value of caring

- Carers save taxpayers an estimated \$40.9 billion annually (the cost of replacing carers providing informal care with paid care workers) (Access Economics, 2010).

Further information:

For further information on Carers Week go to www.carersaustralia.com/au/carersweek

For further information on carers go to www.carersnsw.asn.au

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