

13 May 2008

4 Corners highlights the need for government support for carers

ABC TV's *4 Corners*' carer special, *In my shoes*, last night highlighted the individual lives and situations of carers, which Carers NSW has been strongly advocating to improve for many years.

CEO of Carers NSW, Elena Katrakis, said the timing of the program was pertinent given the Federal Budget will be announced today.

"*In my shoes* highlighted what we know to be serious concerns for carers, namely the impact of long-term caring upon their own health and wellbeing, financial security and ability to plan for their future. Not to mention the amount they save governments by providing care to some of the most vulnerable members of our communities," said Ms Katrakis.

"The Federal Budget Submission by Carers Australia through the Network of Carer Associations, of which Carers NSW is a member, outlined ways in which the federal government could address these impacts in their first Budget, and this program strongly reinforced the Network's recommendations.

"The Network of Carers Associations recommended a national carer framework and introduction of a Families Responsibilities and Carers' Rights Act, initiatives to improve carers health and wellbeing, increased carer income, legislation and other support for employed carers, funding for carer and service provider education and the needs of specific carer groups, such as single parent carers and Aboriginal and Islander carers," she said.

"We have heard that today's Budget is likely to extend the eligibility criteria for Carer Payment (child) to make it available to more carers. We hope the government will extend this goodwill by announcing other meaningful policy and programs to support Australian carers today.

"The NSW Government has already taken measures to show its strong support of the state's 750,000 carers, announcing a five-year NSW Carer Action Plan in 2007 to ensure carers are recognised, respected and valued and that services for carers and the people they care for improved.

"Carers NSW hopes that all levels of government – federal and state – continue to build on their commitment to carers and provide adequate carer support," said Ms Katrakis.

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Carers are family members or friends who provide unpaid care for people with a disability, mental health problem, chronic condition or who are frail aged. Carers NSW is the peak organisation for carers in New South Wales and the only state-wide organisation that has carers as its primary focus.