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Carers NSW helps carers take a break during National Carers Week

Carers NSW is helping hundreds of carers across the state take a break from caring by funding numerous social events in celebration of National Carers Week 2007 (14-20 October).

CEO of Carers NSW, Elena Katrakis, said National Carers Week is about celebrating and recognising the invaluable contribution of carers, and helping them take some time out from caring.

"We know many carers have little or no social contact due to their caring role, so with funding from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care we have funded 135 carer support groups and organisations to organise events for carers across the state including picnics, morning teas, lunches, and trips," said Ms Katrakis.

"This means carers get to take a break from caring, while at the same time celebrating the valuable work they do," she said.

"Many of the events will be run by carer support groups and organisations who organise regular get-togethers for carers, and this is an excellent way for carers to start tapping into these social networks, and hopefully begin to alleviate some of their social isolation," said Ms Katrakis.

A recent study of 1000 carers by the Australian Government's Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Australian Institute of Family Studies confirmed that carers are often socially isolated and do not get to see friends and family as often as they would like.

Nearly 50 per cent of those surveyed said they want more social interaction. Carers socialise more infrequently than the general population because of their caring duties. 18 per cent of carers go on a social outing only once or twice every three months or less, in comparison to 10 per cent of the general population.

The study found that caring duties, financial hardship and carers' own poor health accounted for the low level of social contact that many carers experience. Some carers said they couldn't afford to go out to socialise or cover the costs of catering for guests at home.

The findings are consistent with international research which has found that carers' social lives are affected by caring.

"The study shows that carers clearly need increased assistance with accessing social opportunities outside the household," said Ms Katrakis

"On a practical level this means that policies or services that aim to enhance the social lives of carers may need to provide more intensive support to carers of people with high care needs, carers experiencing financial hardship or carers experiencing poor health.

"While opportunities for carers to socialise during National Carers Week are important, the issue of carers' social isolation needs to be addressed year-round," she said.

Visit our website newsroom www.carersnsw.asn.au for more information.

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 body for carers in New South Wales and the only state-wide organisation that has carers as its primary focus.

Media contact

Helen Clarke, Carers NSW Marketing Communication Coordinator, 9280 4744