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Carers New South Wales is the peak state advocacy body 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 aged.

# Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2007.

## **WORLD FIRST: NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON *ETHICS OF CARING IN A GOOD SOCIETY***

On Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April, Carers NSW, with partners Macquarie Bank Foundation and St James Ethics Centre, will launch a major project '**Who Cares?**' *The Ethics of Caring in a Good Society: national conversation, national action*. There is an ageing population and an increasingly aged carer population. This is not confined to Australia. It is a worldwide trend. However, no nation has engaged in a national conversation to determine the way forward. This world-first research project, funded by the Macquarie Bank Foundation, has the potential to influence and shape this growing caring sector, internationally.

Carers NSW, with our partners Macquarie Bank Foundation and St James Ethics Centre, **invite media representatives to attend the 'Who Cares?' project launch on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 11am-12.15pm**, at Macquarie Bank, Level 22, 20 Bond Street, Sydney.

Carers are relatives or friends providing care to a person with a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, or who is frail aged. There is considerable uncertainty about whether the current caring scenario can be maintained. Both the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare* (AIHW) and the *National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling* (NATSEM), have considered the future supply of carers. In the case of carers of older people, NATSEM found, that while the number of available carers will rise 57% by 2031, the number of older people requiring care will increase by 160%. This will lead to a shortfall of people available to provide care.

Against this background, Carers NSW, the peak state organisation for carers, asks the questions: "*What is a good society? What is caring? Whose responsibility is it to care? What does caring look like in a good society?*"

Laraine Toms, President of Carers NSW, said the project is crucial work which could influence the future of caring in our Australian community. "*We are facing a future crisis in caring. No other nation has undertaken such a research project on caring,*" said Ms Toms. "*The national conversation is about what Australians think caring should be in the future in a civil society. For instance, consider young carers and the impact of caring on their lives, or consider a mature carer who has been caring for fifty years and is faced with continuing to care for an indefinite period as their own health and wellbeing declines. Then ask whether Australians think it is ethical that either young or ageing carers miss out on opportunities, or experience decreased health and wellbeing, because of their caring role. Is it right? Maybe Australians will indicate they are happy with the way things are, but the questions need to be asked and discussed.*"

The 'Who Cares?' project will be underpinned by the research findings from fifty focus groups to be conducted across the nation, and online feedback available to all through the St James Ethics Centre website. To reflect the diversity of the Australian experience, focus group participants will include current and former carers, the corporate and small business sectors, media, public and private health and disability sectors, ethicists, medical practitioners, government and non-government organisations. Both religious and secular perspectives will be sought, as well as perspectives from people from different geographic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The project work is expected to be twelve to eighteen months in duration.

Julie White, Head of the Macquarie Bank 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 outlined the project to be implemented over the next twelve to eighteen months. "*The 'Who Cares?' project will include the following phases: to research nationally what fundamental values might be held by a civil society; to determine the implications these values have at personal and systemic levels for caring for people of all ages who have a chronic illness, a disability, a mental illness or who are frail aged.*"

The 'Who Cares?' findings will highlight what the Australian community believes the future for caring should look like, and will inform government, families, and the community at large in their decision making about people needing care and their families.

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To learn more about carers, or listen to carer stories and Carers Week 2006 key facts (audio files) to assist with your media story, visit [www.carersnsw.asn.au](http://www.carersnsw.asn.au). For information and support for carers call the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636.

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#### **About Carers NSW Inc.**

Carers New South Wales is the peak state advocacy body 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.

#### **About The Macquarie Bank Foundation**

Macquarie has been involved in community giving since 1969 and the Macquarie Bank Foundation was formally established in 1984. Over this time, Macquarie has supported many hundreds of organisations working to support and improve the communities in which we live and work. The Macquarie Bank Foundation and Macquarie staff currently contribute about \$11 million a year to more than 400 community organisations worldwide. [www.macquarie.com/foundation/index.htm](http://www.macquarie.com/foundation/index.htm)

#### **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](http://www.ethics.org.au)