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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.

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NSW CARER ACTION PLAN LAUNCH AT CARERS NSW CONFERENCE

Thursday 8th March, 2007, Sydney, the NSW State Government this morning launched the **NSW Carer Action Plan 2007-2012**, outlining the NSW Government's commitment to carers over the next five years. The *NSW Carer Action Plan* was launched by Ms Robyn Kruk, Director General of NSW Department of Health, at the Carers NSW bi-annual conference "*Partnerships for Better Health Outcomes: Carers and Professionals working together*". Carers NSW welcomes the new plan and looks forward to continuing a collaborative approach to improving carers' circumstances.

A carer is a person who cares for a family member or friend with a disability, mental illness, a chronic condition or who is frail aged. The *NSW Carer Action Plan* includes significant new support in the areas of mental illness, physical disabilities, as well as expanding measures to support carers such as the *NSW Carers Program*. The *NSW Carer Action Plan* recognises the need for support for carers crosses a range of policy areas such as ageing, community support, health, education, transport, employment and industrial relations.

As Robyn Kruk stated during this morning's launch, the *NSW Carer Action Plan* signals that caring is now recognised mainstream Government business and recognises that support of carers is pivotal across a range of sectors. Ms Kruk observed that 72% of carers in Australia are women and highlighted the importance of recognition of carers in the light of today's International Women's Day.

Two other key announcements conveyed by Ms Kruk were that the *NSW Carer Action Plan* will increase recurrent peak funding for Carers NSW to AU\$556,000 per annum, to develop the capacity of NGOs in NSW to respond to carers; and further that the Plan also includes increasing funding to the Provision of Aids and Appliances Program for Disabled People (PADP) to AU\$23Million (2006-07), which will have a positive impact and flow on effect to carers.

The following is an excerpt from the *NSW Carer Action Plan* highlighting a central aspect of the need for increased and continuing work around carers: "*It is difficult to predict the future, but it is likely that the numbers of carers will increase (but at a slower rate than those needing care), there will possibly be more male carers and depending on future policies and responses, possibly more carers who combine work and care and more collective community responsibility for caring.*"

"*Better support for families and carers has significant long-term benefits for the whole community, not just those being cared for.*" Morris lemma, MP.

“The lemma Government’s recognition of the importance of supporting carers, and not taking carers for granted is welcomed by Carers NSW. The newly launched NSW Carer Action Plan includes resources across many priority carer areas, such as for Young Carers, carers in the workplace, and positive work in the area of housing,” states Elena Katrakis, Chief Executive Officer, Carers NSW. “The Plan addresses the complexity of delivering services via a whole of government approach, which is a goal we’ve been collectively working on for some time.”

The bi-annual conference organised by Carers NSW, the peak body for carers, titled *“Partnerships for Better Health Outcomes: Carers and Professionals working together”* is funded by NSW Health through the NSW Carers Program. The conference is being held in Cockle Bay, Sydney, designed for professionals working in acute, primary, community health and community care, bringing together health and community care professionals from across the State, providing the opportunity to explore practices, ideas, research and initiatives in carers support. Keynote speakers at the conference include Professor Bettina Cass, Dr Jayne Lucke, Dr Deanna Pagnini, and Dr Norman Swan.

*“The conference commenced today with a challenging, detailed address from Bettina Cass, calling for participants in the sector to **consider the worth of caring**,” states Elena Katrakis, Chief Executive Officer, Carers NSW.*

For more information on the conference visit Carers NSW online at www.carernsw.asn.au

To arrange an interview with Elena Katrakis, Chief Executive Officer, Carers NSW or an individual carer contact **Leigh White on 0431 932 122** or after hours via **whitemco@bigpond.net.au**

To listen to Carers Week messages (to assist you with your story and news segments) from the President of Carers NSW visit us on the web at www.carersnsw.asn.au and follow the link to Carers Week webpage.

Carers are relatives or friends who provide care and support to children or adults who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition or who are frail aged. Carers can be anyone, anytime, be it parents, partners, brothers, sisters, friends or even children.

Carers rarely have any special qualifications or training. They are people like you, who have found themselves in a caring role for a range of different reasons. The theme "Anyone, Anytime" is about recognising that becoming a carer is often unexpected. Fortunately, there is support available and we would like carers and their families need to become aware of it. For information and support call the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636.

Who are Carers?

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 - There are 2.6 million unpaid carers in Australia:
 - The majority (75.6%) of carers are workforce age (18-64)
 - Almost seven percent (6.6%) of carers are under 18 years old
 - Carers over 65 years make up 17.7% of the carer population
 - In 2005 unpaid carers provided an estimated 1.2 billion hours of care
 - If the care provided by carers was replaced with services purchased from formal care providers, the replacement value would be \$30.5 billion
 - Each carer's experience is unique. Some carers need to assist with tasks of daily living, and for these people caring is a full time occupation with days spent 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.

To read the latest information on carers visit www.carersnsw.asn.au