

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

Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2007.

## **CARERS CAN'T WAIT BETTER SUPPORT NEEDED FOR CARERS**

In preparation for the 2007 **NSW State Election**, Carers NSW has developed four key messages. Carers NSW expects the NSW Government to consider the four Election Platforms that reflect carers' needs. The four key Platforms are: **NSW Carer Policy** to be implemented; **NSW Carer Card** to be introduced; expanded **NSW Carers Program** bringing resources and support to carers; and finally **better access to quality services that are flexible**.

Australian and International evidence demonstrates the many financial, social and health impacts associated with caring. Nearly 11% of the total NSW population are carers – that's 750,000 people in NSW alone. 90% of older people living in the community who need assistance receive it from family, friends or neighbours.

*"Its part of the natural life-course that everyone will become a carer at some stage – ANYONE, ANYTIME,"* said Elena Katrakis, Carers NSW Chief Executive Officer, *"We recognise that the current NSW Government enabled improved services specifically for carers of people with a mental illness. Yet, the number of ageing carers will increase rapidly over the next two decades, creating even greater urgency for Government to understand and provide resources and support for carers on the whole."*

Carers NSW four Platforms for the 2007 NSW State Election:

1. Carers need to be formally recognised through a broad policy: implementing a **NSW Carer Policy** will improve recognition and support of carers.
2. Carers need concessions which deliver a better financial deal: introducing a **NSW Carer Card** will improve financial support and increase carers' ability to participate in community life.
3. Carers need to maintain their health and well being: an expanded **NSW Carers' Program** will increase the capacity to support carers.
4. Carers need **better access to quality services that are flexible** in the Home and Community Care Program, disability services and in community health.

To assist in raising awareness of the four Election Platforms, Carers NSW undertook a direct mail-out campaign, delivering postcards and brochures to MPs and Carers NSW members. The brochure detailing the four Election Platforms outlined by Carers NSW was sent to MPs. The postcard campaign was delivered to carers, urging each carer to send the postcard to their local candidate or MP, telling them what they need as a carer.

For more information visit the Carers NSW website which displays the 2007 State Election advocacy work. Carers NSW recommends that better investment in carers means better quality care for those they support, effective and sustainable community and health care systems, increased community awareness and long term cost-savings for government.

Media Enquiries: To arrange an interview with Elena Katrakis, Chief Executive Officer, Carers NSW or with an individual carer contact Leigh White, PH - 0431 932 122 - whitemco@bigpond.net.au

To listen to Carers NSW audio messages (to assist you with your story and news segments) visit us on the web at [www.carersnsw.asn.au](http://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 to become aware of it. For information and support call the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636.

Who are Carers?

- 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.
  - 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.