



Full Day Hansard Transcript (Legislative Assembly, 22 June 2011, Proof)

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Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Wednesday, 22 June 2011 (Proof).

CARERS

Mr MARK COURE: My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. What action is the Government taking to address issues faced by carers in New South Wales, which was raised at a recent meeting of the Carers Advisory Council?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Oatley for his eminently sensible question and recognise his interest in matters relating to carers, particularly in his local community.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Obviously they do not want to hear this. The question it has nothing to do with industrial relations so those opposite have no interest. Carers in this State have suffered enormously in silence: high levels of depression, marriage breakdown, high levels of financial hardship and social isolation. All too often they spend their time fighting government agencies and departments in order to get support services for their loved ones. In opposition the Liberals and The Nationals led by example by introducing the carers recognition legislation; in government we will enact it. It is clear that the 850,000 high-level carers in this State, of which 265,000 are primary carers, make an enormous contribution. Last year Access Economics revealed data that showed carers contribute some \$14 billion in unpaid carer leave to our community. Yet all too often their role remains unrecognised.

The reason for the implementation of the Carers (Recognition) Bill was twofold: first, to enact a carers' charter, which establishes a number of clauses; and, secondly, to enact a process that enabled carers, particularly primary carers, to have a direct route to government to talk about their concerns and ideas to meet some of their challenges. A fortnight ago I chaired the first Ministerial Advisory Council for Carers and was particularly concerned about some issues faced by carers across this State. Some issues were the most basic things, such as establishing a carers group within a community, and all too often having to deal with challenges about insurance and in some cases a place to meet. I was concerned also to learn about some of the challenges facing young carers in this State: 90,000 carers are under the age of 25 and 40,000 of that number are under the age of 18—incredible statistics.

This demonstrates that too many young people in this State do not enjoy the same benefits as their peers because they must deal with the challenges of looking after someone with a disability, mental illness or chronic illness, or someone who is frail aged. I was pleased to meet Tabitha Wilson, who is a young carer on the advisory council and who resides in Queanbeyan in the Monaro electorate. Tabitha spoke of the enormous challenges she faces, but particularly about her desire to see the establishment of a carers group in her community for young people. She also would like greater awareness amongst the teaching profession about the challenges young carers face during their schooling and beyond the classroom in their home environment where they care for a loved one.

Many carers face this enormously difficult issue. Research clearly shows high levels of depression, upwards of 50 per cent in some instances, and upwards of 25 per cent for severe depression. This Government is determined to provide better support for carers in this State. That is why our five-year disability plan that will commence on 1 July will make available 4,500 more respite places. We are determined to better support the State's carers because for too long government ignored their plight and the challenges they face. The O'Farrell Government is determined to turn that around.