

Stronger Together consultation feedback
Ageing, Disability and Home Care
strongertogether@dadhc.nsw.gov.au

16 July 2010

Dear Sir/Madam,

Carers NSW welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the second phase of *Stronger Together*.

About Carers NSW

Carers NSW is the peak organisation for carers in NSW. It is a member of the national Network of Carers Associations and has an exclusive focus on supporting and advocating for all carers in the state.

The core work of Carers NSW is to:

- Be the voice for carers in NSW
- Undertake research, policy development and advocacy
- Provide carer services and programs
- Provide education and training for carers and services providers
- Build capacity in the sector.

Carers NSW' vision is that caring is accepted as a shared community responsibility and that all carers in NSW are recognised, valued and supported by their communities and by governments.

The goal of all of the work Carers NSW undertakes is for carers in NSW to have improved opportunities and access to services that meet their needs regardless of their age, gender, circumstances, location or cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Who Carers NSW represents

Carers NSW defines a carer as any individual who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug and alcohol dependencies, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail.

Carers come from all walks of life, cultural backgrounds and age groups. For many caring is a 24 hour job that is often emotionally, physically and financially stressful. Across NSW there is an estimated 750,000 carers, comprising individuals as young as 8 years of age through to the very elderly.

Key statistics about caring in NSW

According to statistics on carers from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC):

- Approximately one third of all carers in Australia live in NSW
- 40 per cent of primaryⁱ carers cared for a partner, 29 per cent for a child, 32 per cent for other (eg sibling, parent)
- Women aged 45-54 years were the largest single group of carers
- 45 per cent of primary carers provided 40 hours or more care per week on average
- 78 per cent of primary carers lived with the person they supported
- 75 per cent of carers were of workforce age although 45 per cent were not in the workforce
- 55 per cent of primary carers relied on a government allowance or pension as their principal source of incomeⁱⁱ

Carers NSW response to 'The next five years – a consultation paper'

This submission will respond to only some of the questions posed in the consultation paper. Our response to these questions will focus on these issues as they relate to carers.

1. How can we best equip people with a disability and their families and carers with the information and knowledge so they can make informed choices?

Carers of people with a disability have diverse and significant information needs. The *Who Cares...? Report on the inquiry into better support for carers* released in April 2009 identifies access to information about supports, services and assistance as one of the six main challenges faced by carers.¹

The *Who Cares...?* report identified that carers need increased access to information, education, training, family and carer advocacy, case management and care coordination services. Barriers to accessing information for carers included an overly complex and fragmented service system, limited time of carers, language and unawareness of rights to services and the lack of availability of information in specific service settings.²

The second phase of *Stronger Together* must make the information needs of carers a priority, otherwise the value of any additional or improved services and supports will be compromised. The provision of information must be simplified and improved so that carers know what services exist and how to access them, without having to spend time, energy and resources they do not have to find out what they need, or 'stumbling' upon services and supports long after they are first required.

Recommendation 1

Carers NSW recommends that the second phase of *Stronger Together* has as a priority better information provision to carers.

The *Who Cares...?* report also identified that carers have significant education needs. Carers are increasingly required to manage complex health and care needs of people

ⁱ A primary carer is someone who takes on the main caring responsibilities of a care recipient. Australian Bureau of Statistics defines a primary carer as a person who provides the most informal assistance on an ongoing basis, to another person who is restricted by one or more core activities in the areas of communication, mobility and self care. A secondary carer provides informal care in a supporting role where either another family member or formal services provide the majority of care.

ⁱⁱ ABS (2004) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) Summary of Findings, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

with serious medical conditions, disability, mental illness and terminal illness, and need information and education to be able to do so.³

Carers also need education and support to be able to access and better use services. In our 2010-11 pre-budget submission to the NSW Government, Carers NSW recommended that education courses be funded for carers about the use and benefits of respite in order to increase the utilisation of respite services by carers. This recommendation is based on a report by Alzheimer's Australia which demonstrates that respite may be better utilised by carers if they have received education about it. Alzheimer's Australia found that when carers attended an education course that included information about using respite 95 per cent of them felt that they would be comfortable using respite compared to 43 per cent prior to the course. This report indicates that as well as needing education about how to use respite and its benefits, sometimes carers also 'need permission' to use respite services.⁴

Recommendation 2

Carers NSW recommends that funding is allocated to education courses for education and training for carers, including education courses for carers about how to use respite and its benefits in order to increase carers utilisation of respite services.

2. What assistance is needed to plan and arrange supports?

Carers NSW supports the NSW Government's acknowledgement that "...there needs to be greater priority given to making the specialist disability system person-centred..."⁵ Carers NSW believes that giving carers more control over the services they use is important for increasing their choices and quality of life. It is essential, however, that any shift towards a person-centred approach, where the carer is at the core of decision-making about their lives, avoid creating more work for the carer and does not leave them to navigate the complex service system on their own. Models such as that being trialled in the *my plan, my choice*: Individualised (Packaged) Support Participatory Action Research Strategy (currently being undertaken by ADHC) are important as they provide support for the carer to be able to make and exercise an informed decision. In the *my plan, my choice* pilot being conducted by Carers NSW the carer receives assistance from a support planner and a support intermediary. For many carers, similar or other assistance to plan and arrange support will be needed in a person-centred approach, and as such must be available for all carers if and when they require it.

Support co-ordination

Carers NSW' experience as a provider of the *Support Coordination Program for Older Parent Carers* has demonstrated to us the significant need of some carers to be supported through another agent in order to access and arrange services. Older parent carers are people aged 60 or over (or 45 or over if an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander) who are caring for their son or daughter with a disability or long-term illness.

Older parent carers often need assistance to plan and arrange the services they require. They are often hidden carers, who are receiving no services and who are largely invisible to the established service system. Some of the older parent carers in our program have never received any services, and do not know that services exist. These carers often need support to understand that there are services for them. Carer organisations including Carers NSW have identified that older parent carers need urgent help to plan for their future including support with emergency planning, long-term care planning and 'succession' planning.

Older parent carers are just one example of the need of some carers for assistance to plan and arrange services. Such assistance will also be of use to other carers,

particularly other hidden carers, including Aboriginal carers, Torres Strait Islander carers, young carers and carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. All carers need to have the choice to access such assistance if needed.

Recommendation 3

Carers NSW recommends that assistance to plan and arrange supports is provided to ensure that a person-centred service system is inclusive of all carers.

Education

For a person-centred service system to work, education for carers must be provided so that they are able to understand the service system and their place in it, and make informed choices about their lives and the services they receive. Education would be required in a variety of forms to meet the diverse needs of carers and should include:

- awareness sessions to give an overview of the service system (and any changes to it), what it means for carers and where further information, education and support to use the system can be found
- a telephone information service, through providing funding to the Carer Line or other similar services to enable them to provide specific assistance and explanations about the service system
- information resources such as fact sheets, which should be available in community languages and simple English, both online and in hardcopy at places carers are likely to frequent, such as the waiting areas at Centrelink, hospitals general practitioners and community centres.

Recommendation 4

Carers NSW recommends that the NSW Government provide education and information to carers to enable and support informed decision-making in a person-centred service system.

3. How can we improve the timing of interventions to support families and carers?

Carers NSW believes that a focus is needed on early intervention for carers, which would mean ensuring that the right supports are in place early so that better outcomes are achieved in the long-term. At present there is no formal emphasis on early intervention for carers and very little evidence about what it may look like.

The *Carer Life Course Framework* demonstrates that carers require specific interventions at certain phases of their caring journey or life course.⁶ Unfortunately, many carers are not engaged or identified upon the commencement of their caring role which has implications for long-term outcomes. It is vital that young carers in particular are identified and supported at the earliest possible stage, to help reduce the negative impacts which may arise from their caring role.⁷

Carers NSW believes that the potential benefits of early intervention for carers include; the prevention of crisis, the prevention of carer burn out, the achievement of better outcomes for the carer and the care recipient, increased perceptions and experience of support, a reduction in carers becoming 'hidden', an improved relationship between the carer and care recipient, an increased ability to cope with the caring role, more choice about the caring role and care support, and less impact on the carers health and wellbeing.

It is because of the significance of these potential benefits that Carers NSW recommends that further research is undertaken on what early intervention might look

like for carers, as well as its impacts, to create an evidence-base to improve the timing of interventions for carers.

Recommendation 5

Carers NSW recommends that the NSW Government provide funding for research into early intervention for carers in order to gain a better understanding of how carers can be supported and outcomes for them improved.

4. What combination and types of services can we use to boost family resilience?

Carers NSW supports the commitment of the NSW Government to 'strengthening families' and to boosting family and carer resilience. However, we would like to emphasise that while services to increase carer resilience are important, they will not negate the need for care to be a shared community responsibility. Families can not be made so strong or so resilient that they can bear the burden of care alone. Services to improve carer resilience will be very welcome, but they must complement other services and supports that provide carers with real choice about their caring responsibilities and make caring sustainable.

Carers NSW believes that to boost carer resilience we need to address some of the most significant impacts of caring including; social isolation, financial stress and disadvantage, limited employment and education opportunities and poor health and wellbeing. Services that could address these impacts include respite and in-home assistance, supports for carers to remain in or rejoin the workforce, and support services such as carer support groups.

Respite

The provision of adequate and appropriate respite services is vital to improving carer resilience. Respite was one of the key issues raised by Carers NSW in our 2010-11 pre-budget submission to the NSW Government. In our consultations with carers, nearly every carer states that they want more respite. The need for more respite was also evident in the *Who Cares...?* report, and it was one of two services repeatedly mentioned during the Better Support for Carers Inquiry as both critically important and in short supply.⁸

Carers NSW acknowledges the inclusion of respite services as a priority in *Stronger Together*, and that some progress has been made in terms of reductions in the number of temporarily unavailable respite beds. However, it must be recognised that significant increases in capacity are required and that fundamental changes need to be made to the way in which these services are delivered. To be of benefit to carers, respite services must meet the needs of the carer and the person requiring care.

The evidence suggests that demand for respite is increasing. For example, a 2009 progress report for the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) on specialist disability services found that funded respite services registered the highest growth in service users relative to target population. In 2007-08, 31,500 people used CSTDA-funded respite services compared with 20,500 in 2003-04, corresponding to an increase from 96 respite users per 1,000 target population in 2003-04 to 137 per 1,000 in 2007-08. Over the same period, government expenditure per respite service user fell by 16 per cent in real terms. Data on hours of respite received show a downward trend from an average of 12.1 per respite user per week in 2003-04 to 10.5 hours per week in 2007-08.⁹

The Home and Community Care Program 2007-08 Annual Report indicated that the highest average hours of service to clients by assistance type was for centre-based day

care (130 hours) followed by respite care (86 hours). It is important to note, as stated in the report, that these averages are a rough measure of service provision and do not reflect the experiences of individuals. For example, some clients receive services throughout the entire year and others for only short periods.¹⁰

The evidence suggests that the amount of government funding in real terms for respite per service user has decreased. Meanwhile carers have identified increased respite availability as a high need for their caring role. Carers NSW believes that respite is an essential service for carers and that funding for respite in NSW must be provided according to the need for this service. In light of the findings regarding respite usage discussed here, Carers NSW recommends, as in previous submissions, that the allocation of funding for respite services in NSW is increased to align with demand, and with the identified need by carers.

Recommendation 6

Carers NSW recommends that the NSW Government increase its allocation of funding for respite for all carers in NSW.

In addition to the limited capacity of respite services, the affordability and flexibility of respite is also a significant issue for many carers. The Consultation paper indicates that *Stronger Together* 'pursues a person-centred approach' and '...systems which are capable of meeting people's choices and needs'. Unfortunately, the rhetoric is not yet matched by the reality experienced by many carers. Carers NSW continues to hear concerns from carers regarding respite. Issues commonly raised include;

- lack of appropriate respite places for the person they care for, especially for those with high support needs, for whom the only available option is often a residential care facility
- inadequate funded respite which leaves many carers with no respite for actually having a break, as all their respite is used for work and family commitments
- inflexibility of the services provided, which in some cases renders them inaccessible or of limited benefit
- being offered services they don't need but denied the services they do
- lack of transport options between home and respite, and between school or day programs and respite
- considerable out-of-pocket costs
- lack of culturally appropriate respite services for Aboriginal people and for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Stronger Together needs to make better respite provision a priority. In addition to increasing allocation of funding for respite services to align with demand, it is vital that changes are made to the service system so that it is more closely aligned with the needs and choices of the carer and the person with a disability, including Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Respite needs to be more flexible, and driven less by fixed program structures and more by the needs of the people who use it. It is the services who must meet the needs of the people, instead of the current situation where it is the carers and people with a disability who must meet the needs of the service or go without.

Recommendation 7

Carers NSW recommends that the NSW Government implement a fundamental shift in the delivery of respite services, from an inflexible, unresponsive system to one that can respond to the needs and choices of service users.

Transport

Carers NSW believes that a key support to improving service utilisation by carers, and therefore their resilience, is the provision of community transport, particularly for people accessing respite.

The lack of transport options for carers, including, as mentioned above, transport to and from respite is a significant issue, particularly for carers from rural and remote areas. The difficulties of transporting the care recipient and the time involved in doing so may reduce service utilisation, and therefore resilience. A Western Australia study of 76 rural and remote carers found that the key issues were not so much a lack of services, but rather access to services, due to travel time and distance, financial constraints and the physical management of the care recipient.¹¹ For those carers who do continue to access services despite the lack of transport services, the benefits of the services, and any increase of their resilience that may result, are compromised by the time, cost and stress involved in transporting the care recipient, whether it is crossing peak hour traffic in a metropolitan centre, or great distances in rural NSW.

Recommendation 8

Carers NSW recommends that the NSW Government funds the provision of community transport for people accessing respite.

Support for carers to remain in or rejoin workforce

Carers NSW supports the commitment made by *Stronger Together* to increase the number of people with a disability in the workforce, and recommends that this focus on employment be extended to also include carers. As the consultation paper suggests, participation in employment and education builds skills, independence and confidence and provides better social outcomes. These benefits are also important to carers for whom participation in employment or education would alleviate and possibly prevent some of the negative impacts of caring, such as social isolation, financial stress and high dependence on government income supports. Employment and education may also improve carer resilience through the break that they provide from the caring role.

The need for support for carers to participate in the workforce is clear. Carers' labour force participation is much lower than that of the rest of the population. In 2005, Access Economics reported that the labour force participation rate for all carers was only 56.1 per cent compared to 67.9 per cent for the general population. The labour force participation rate for primary carers is even lower at just 39 per cent, with participation in full-time employment only 19.2 per cent. In other words, the labour force participation of primary carers is less than half that of the general population. This is a particular issue for women, who represent 71 per cent of primary carers.¹²

Carers are also more likely to have low personal and household income levels. SDAC 2003 data shows that the average income for carers was more than 25 per cent lower than for non-carers. Around 32 per cent of all carers and 44 per cent of primary carers were living in low income households compared with 17 per cent of non-carers. The combination of low income and the costs associated with caring mean that carers often experience high levels of financial stress. The Australian Bureau of Statistics found that in 2006 22 per cent of all carers had taken dissaving actions, such as borrowing money, in the previous twelve months, 19 per cent had experienced cash-flow problems, and 15 per cent had difficulty paying bills. Almost one third of families receiving carer benefits experience difficulty in paying utility bills compared to less than 15 per cent of the general population.¹³

The statistics regarding labour market participation of carers do not reveal some of the other adverse impacts of caring on employment. For those who remain in the workforce, balancing work and employment can be a considerable challenge. The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index Survey found that over one third of employed carers were concerned about losing their job because of their caring responsibilities.¹⁴ Many carers are forced to change jobs, reduce work hours or refuse or not pursue promotion they would otherwise have achieved. Although they may remain in the workforce, these carers do not achieve full participation as a result of their caring responsibilities.

The *NSW Carers Action Plan 2007-2012* Priority for Action Five states that 'carers are supported to combine caring and work'.¹⁵ To make this a reality, the following initiatives are required.

Improved respite/alternative care services

Increased funding to respite programs and more flexible service provision, as discussed above, is of critical importance for carers and would be of particular benefit to carers who are working or would like to work. There are clear links between the lack of alternative care services and low labour market participation. According to the 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers just over half of unemployed primary carers had left work specifically to start or increase care. 38 per cent of primary carers who had left employment to care indicated that they had done so because alternative care was not available or was too expensive, or because they had been unable to change their working arrangements.¹⁶ In 2006, The Taskforce on Care Costs found that more than half of carers would increase their work hours if the cost of alternative care was more affordable.¹⁷ It is clear that if alternative care services are available, carers will be more able to balance work and care responsibilities.

Right to request flexible working arrangements

To enable carers to remain in or rejoin the workforce, the right to request flexible working arrangements must be extended to all carers. The *Who Cares...?* report recommended that section 65(1) of the Fair Work Act 2009 "...be amended to extend the right to request flexible working arrangements to all employees who have recognised care responsibilities, including those caring for adults with disabilities, mental illness, chronic illness or who are frail aged." Thus Carers NSW was disappointed at the NSW Government's decision to adopt the Fair Work Act 2009 as the National Employment Standard (NES), effectively excluding the right of all carers to request flexible working arrangements.

Despite the adoption of the Act, the NSW Government can still take a pro-active approach to ensuring that all carers have the right to request flexible working conditions. For instance, Baird et al. suggest that there is a more direct role to be played by the states and territories:

It appears therefore, that using anti-discrimination legislation, the NSW State government could act to provide workers with caring responsibilities for adults with better access to flexible working than is currently available by way of antidiscrimination laws. Models exist on which to build. Victoria, the UK and New Zealand have all recently created a right for an employee to seek to alter their work arrangements to help combine caring and employment (47).¹⁸

Carers NSW agrees that there is more room for innovative solutions and possible changes in the legislation to ensure that all carers in NSW have the right to request flexible work.

Recommendation 9

Carers NSW recommends that the NSW Government explore opportunities to amend legislation as required for all carers in NSW to have the right to request flexible work regardless of age or relationship status.

Recommendation 10

Carers NSW recommends that the NSW Government request through the Council of Australian Governments that the Commonwealth Government amends the Fair Work Act 2009 and the National Employment Standards to include the right for all carers to have the right to request flexible work arrangements regardless of age or relationship status.

Vocational training

As the SDAC 2003 data demonstrates, many carers leave the workforce as a result of their caring responsibilities. Research by Baird et al shows that once carers leave the workforce to undertake caring responsibilities they often do not re-enter at the same level or at all, even when their caring responsibilities have ended.¹⁹

To complement strategies that enable carers to remain in the workforce, assistance will also be required to help those carers who have already left to re-enter the workforce, because they are at the end of their caring role or are now able to balance work and care because of new supports and entitlements.

Support to re-enter the workforce will also be of critical importance for those carers affected by changes being made by the Australian government to income support eligibility. Carers who will be moved to Newstart allowance after many years of caring will need assistance to meet the job-search requirements and to successfully re-enter the labour force.

Carers NSW believes that the NSW Government should fund the subsidisation of additional vocational training to assist carers who have left the paid workforce as a result of their caring role to re-enter the paid workforce.

Recommendation 11

Carers NSW recommends that the NSW Government provide funding for training for carers who have left the paid workforce as a result of their caring role.

Carers NSW also supports recognition of the skills carers develop through their caring role. In 2008 Carers Australia was funded by the Department of Health and Ageing to run an education and training project for carers. As part of this project, Carers Australia drafted a unit of competency called 'Work effectively as a carer' to fit the endorsed community services and community care training packages. This competency was designed to assist carers to demonstrate their skills to prospective employers and to assist them to enter vocational training. To date this competency has not been accredited.

Recommendation 12

Carers NSW recommends that the skills developed by carers in their caring role be recognised by relevant endorsed training packages.

5. **What supports should we make available, especially in early childhood, to see universal services work better on an ongoing basis for people with a disability, e.g. child care, playgroups, schools?**

People with a disability and their carers have a right to full access to universal services, including the education system. Submissions to the ongoing Legislative Council Inquiry into the provision of education to students with a disability or special needs demonstrate that there is much work to be done, particular in NSW schools. We expect that submissions made to the Inquiry and its findings will inform *Stronger Together's* approach to making schools work better for people with a disability and their carers. Carers NSW will comment on the supports needed in schools in relation to the needs and experiences of carers.

Recognition of the role of carers in education planning and provision

Carers of children with disabilities have a crucial role in their children's lives not only as parents but also as primary decision makers for the child's health and wellbeing. The *NSW State Health Plan* and the *NSW Carers Action Plan 2007-2012* both emphasise the role of carers as 'partners in care', recognising the integral role that carers play in supporting people with care needs, and the expertise they acquire through this relationship. The contribution of carers needs to be better similarly acknowledged in the education system.

The *NSW Carers Action Plan 2007-2012* recognises that service providers who acknowledge the value of carers and work closely with carers provide better services to the person needing care.²⁰ This is as relevant to education providers as it is to health care providers. Carers are often the best informed party in regards to the needs and capabilities of the student with a disability and thus have a vital role to play in the planning of education provision to the student. Just as carers can help to achieve the best outcomes for their child in the health system, so too can they work as partners with the school to plan for the education of their child.

Feedback from carers suggest that many are not able to work in partnership with the school. Carers have reported that often the school staffs are unaware of the high levels of frustration and anxiety experienced by parents in their caring role. Often staff do not respond well to the assertive approach carers are forced to take in order to secure the services and support their child requires. In some cases, school staff may consider the parent to be 'difficult' or 'demanding' and allow this judgement to affect their willingness to listen to and work with the parent.

Parents of students with disabilities and/or special needs also report being judged or blamed by teaching staff for the difficulties experienced by their child in the educational system.

Carers have also reported a lack of communication with teachers and other staff as a common problem. In some cases, parents are not kept informed of what is being done for their child within the school, and may be anxious that they are not receiving the assistance they need when in fact they are. Not only does this unnecessarily increase the frustration and anxiety experienced by carers, it also undermines or precludes the partnership that needs to be developed if the student is to receive the best education possible.

Recommendation 13

Carers NSW recommends that the role of carers as partners in care, as identified in the *NSW Carers Action Plan 2007-2012*, is recognised and supported in relevant policies and programs of the NSW Department of Education and Training.

Adequate funding provision and appropriate allocation

Carers continually express concern and frustration about the lack of adequate funding available to support their children's participation in education, and the difficulties experienced in accessing what funding is available. The following issues need to be taken into account in the second phase of *Stronger Together*.

- **Onerous application processes**
Carers report that securing funding for their child can be a very time-consuming and demanding process, the success of which often depends more on the ability of the carer to represent their child's needs rather than the child's needs *per se*. Not only does this create unnecessary work and stress for the carer, it risks excluding students whose carers do not have the literacy levels and knowledge of the system required to effectively represent their case.
- **Uncertainty regarding future funding allocations**
Carers need to know that their child's future wellbeing will be assured. The practice of reducing or removing funding when slight improvements are made undermines the continued progression of the student and creates anxiety and uncertainty for the carer.
- **General lack of resources to support students with complex needs**
Some carers have re-located to another region, city or even another country so that their child can attend a school with the necessary resources. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation program *Four Corners* on 15 February 2010 highlighted the lack of appropriate educational facilities for children with severe disabilities.²¹
- **Inadequate funding to allow the student to achieve full participation**
Often the supports that are required for a student to participate in all school activities and programs are not provided. For example, a student may be provided with an aide for very limited hours and a choice has to be made between having the aide's assistance in the classroom or on the playground but not for both activities. Carers should not be forced to choose which elements of school life their child will be excluded from.

Carers NSW believes that in light of these issues, significant changes are required to the amount and allocation of funding available to support people with disabilities in the education system to ensure that our universal education system is indeed universal.

6. Broadening the variety of accommodation options that are sustainable

Carers NSW acknowledges the progress made to date under *Stronger Together* to increase the number of accommodation options available to people with a disability. Carers NSW also acknowledges the challenge that providing more accommodation presents for the NSW Government, especially in terms of the infrastructure development that is required. However, Carers NSW believes that more needs to be done, and more quickly.

As stated in our 2010-11 pre-budget submission to the NSW Government, an urgent increase in the availability of supported accommodation options is needed to provide choice for people with a disability, their families and carers. The carers of people with a disability need to see clear evidence of this priority being rolled out much quicker than is currently the case.

Carers NSW supports the acknowledgement in the consultation paper of the need for a variety of support arrangements and accommodation models. Carers NSW encourages

the NSW Government to continue to increase not only the number of places, but also the variety and the flexibility of accommodation options, and to work with the groups of families across NSW who are actively developing accommodation models for the people they care for. Working with these families is another way for the NSW Government to recognise that people want to choose their accommodation arrangements, and to support a truly person-centred approach.

Recommendation 14

Carers NSW recommends that an urgent increase is made in the number and variety of accommodation options available to people with a disability.

Key recommendations

Recommendation 1

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Recommendation 2

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Carers NSW recommends that the allocation of funding for respite for all carers in NSW is increased.

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Carers NSW recommends that a fundamental shift is made in the delivery of respite services, from an inflexible, unresponsive system to one that can respond to the needs and choices of service users.

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Carers NSW recommends that funding is allocated to the provision of community transport for people accessing respite.

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Carers NSW recommends that the NSW Government explore opportunities to amend legislation as required for all carers in NSW to have the right to request flexible work regardless of age or relationship status.

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Carers NSW recommends that the NSW Government request through the Council of Australian Governments that the Commonwealth Government amends the Fair Work Act

2009 and the National Employment Standards to include the right for all carers to have the right to request flexible work arrangements regardless of age or relationship status.

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Carers NSW recommends that funding is provided for training for carers who have left the paid workforce as a result of their caring role.

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Conclusion

Carers NSW appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback to the second phase of *Stronger Together*. We hope to see our recommendations implemented by the NSW Government, and look forward to seeing the NSW Government honour the commitment it has made to carers in the *NSW Carers Action Plan 2007-2012* and in the recent *Carer (Recognition) Bill*.

Stronger Together is a crucial plank in the Government's support of people with a disability and their carers. Carers NSW trusts that the second phase of *Stronger Together* will be marked by renewed and ongoing support and that the NSW Government's commitment to 'making a real difference to the lives of people with a disability, their families and their carers' will be reflected in the services and supports that are provided over the next five years and beyond.

If you require any further information about Carers NSW response to this consultation paper, please contact Alison Parkinson on 02 9280 4744 or email alisonp@carersnsw.asn.au.

Yours sincerely,



Elena Katrakis
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