

Media Release



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FAMILY CARERS BECOME 'LOST PEOPLE' IN ACT BUDGET

First the Rudd Government potentially overlooked family Carers in the Carer Bonus incident, now the ACT Government has again failed to recognise or support the most vulnerable members of our community.

The theme of the ACT 2008-09 Budget is *"Ready for The Future"* but it has unsuccessfully addressed the looming crises of a rapidly ageing population and the projected number of Carers needed to prevent a collapse of the health system.

With an estimated 95% of care provided to older people within the home setting, the value of family Carers both socially and economically has and will continue to be a critical factor in ensuring the health and wellbeing of our ageing population.

The estimated 43,000 Carers in the ACT currently save the health system over \$524.6m every year. If Carers did not provide this care the health system or community services would be unable to provide an equivalent quality or level of care.

"Carers' voices have simply not been heard," said Dee McGrath, CEO of Carers ACT – the peak body for family Carers in the Territory. *"We provided a compelling case for the ACT Government to urgently invest in unmet current and future needs to better support caring families in a sustainable way. Current support for Carers by the ACT Government is nothing short of piecemeal and tokenistic. Carers in this Territory are now at risk of becoming the 'lost people' in our community."*

Chief Minister Stanhope has been very proud today to announce \$50 million investment in IT to help the ACT public service, but it has not given \$1 into direct services to assist Carers in the community.

Carers are a group at risk, more vulnerable to the pressure of external social and economic factors than the majority of non-Carers in the population. Carers experience poorer health and wellbeing with more than 40% more likely to suffer from a chronic health condition themselves as a result of their caring responsibilities. Yet, caring can be a positive experience when appropriate supports are in place. (Aust. Unity Wellbeing Index – Cummins 2007)

Carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail.

Carers ACT is the recognised and expert voice for Carers, and a member of the National Network of Carers Associations. We are a non-profit association that relies on public and private sector support to fulfil its mission with and on behalf of Carers

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