



**Email received from Dee, read out by Helen at the Carers ACT AGM on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> of November.**

Dear Members

Apologies for being unable to be with you today at our 2009 AGM. I have had to return to Ireland to spend some time with my gravely ill father but will return to Canberra at the end of November.

The Annual Report outlines the many achievements of the Association over the past 12 months. It's good to reflect each year as we see the introduction or expansion of more services for family Carers – not just through Carers ACT but a range of service providers, giving Carers more access and more choice. For many Carers it is still difficult to ask for support. So when they do, it is critical that the service providers provide a holistic response to caring families so that families feel understood, connected and supported. That's why Carers ACT now conducts an annual survey of families who use our services to ensure we are responding appropriately and to support individual needs. The survey results were outstanding and are published on our website and summarized in the Annual Report. However the results provided us with a compass on where we should focus on improving to better support Carers – now the focus of our current 12 month plan.

However, there is still much to be done to meet the changing needs of Carers as they progress through the various stages caring for someone with ongoing care needs.

As well as providing services and supports for Carers, the Association also works to engage with a diverse range of Carers and represent their needs to government – federally and locally. The Association developed a submission to each political party prior to the ACT Election – incorporating the input from more than 300 Carers in the ACT. This resulted in each political party developing their own Carers Policy – published by Carers ACT in a special edition newsletter. One of the key outcomes was the government's response to the economic downturn and recognition of the cost of providing care at home with the announcement of \$1.5m to assist Carers in need. Another election promise is yet to be delivered – to provide advocacy support for Carers.

Last year we also devoted significant time to participate in the National Inquiry for Better Supports for Carers. We developed a submission bringing together the views of the needs of Carers who participated in the ACT election survey as well as the many Carers who participated in robust focus group discussions specifically addressing the Inquiry. Carers ACT also supported numerous individual Carers make their own submission to the

Inquiry. With a diverse range of Carers we also participated in the ACT hearing. This year we will continue to work with our national network partners to ensure the Commonwealth Government take the appropriate action in implementing the recommendations of the Who Cares Report – the resultant report from the national inquiry.

Carers ACT's application for space at Holt old primary school - an ACT government school, was successful. As the lease on the Belconnen Churches Centre comes to a close, the rent here will increase significantly. We believe it is more prudent to direct maximum funding towards Carer services rather than pay large commercial rent for inadequate space. We anticipate moving to the larger Holt site in May. The additional space will enable us to provide a Carer Drop In Centre and undertake more activities. We have already held a forum with Carers to help us shape the new Holt Centre and we will be holding additional forums early in the New Year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board members of Carers ACT for their tireless commitment to the continual development of this organisation. Each of the members bring specific skills to lead a contemporary, service focused organisation as well as firm believers in the Carers Cause. I'd particularly like to thank Brett Walker our very skilled Chairman who supports me with invaluable advice. I understand there have been two additional nominations to the Board – and I warmly welcome these new members to our dynamic Board.

I would also like to thank my work colleagues. Many of you would have been the recipient of their support so you understand what special, caring and dedicated people they are. It is such a privilege working with them and I learn so much from them.

I'll wrap up here as the next agenda item should be a cup of tea!

Look forward to seeing you all on my return.

Sincerely

Dee McGrath  
November 2009