



## Taking 'Time Out'

Getting the opportunity to take time out for yourself can be seemingly impossible when you are Caring for a dependant family member or friend. However, it is important that you look after yourself and to remember that your well-being is just as important as the person you care for. If you are not feeling healthy and strong, how will you be able to properly support the person you are taking care of?

If you are feeling stressed, tired, ill or feel you need time to just 'get away', you should listen to your body. Respite enables you to take a break from your caring role by providing short term alternative care and support. Respite can be for a few hours, overnight, a weekend or longer. Respite support can take place in your own home, in a community setting such as a day program or, for times when a longer period of respite is needed, in a residential facility such as a nursing home.

Regular, planned respite helps minimise stress and give you a break from your caring role to:

- Attend appointments;
- Go shopping;
- Spend time with family or friends;
- Just relax and take time for yourself.

Respite is also for emergencies – if you become ill or need to go to hospital, or when you need to attend to emergency situations in the extended family. Emergency respite is also for times when Carers need an immediate break from their caring role.

In home respite can relieve you of your caring responsibilities for a short time and can include shopping, personal care or house maintenance. It is usually provided for a few hours at a time but in some cases it can be arranged to include overnight care in the home for the person you care for.

Residential respite is short term accommodation within an Aged Care Facility. Aged people with or without a Carer can access residential respite, however planning residential respite is recommended due to the high demand for these services. Carers can book residential respite up to 12 months in advance. The Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre can organise visits of Aged Care Facilities in your area.

Before entry into an Aged Care Facility, a person needs to be assessed by the Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) to determine the appropriate level of care needed. The ACAT assessment is called an Aged Care Client Referral (ACCR) and is valid for twelve months. See page 5 for details on accessing an ACAT.

Carers ACT can help to find the respite options you are entitled to through the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre. Call 1800 059 059 to speak to a Respite Coordinator and find out more. Remember, you cannot care constantly without a break. Turn to page 9 to read about a Carers real experience with respite.



## inside this issue

From the CEO	2	R & R	9
I Wish Someone Had Told Me...	3	Money Matters	10
Mental Health Respite Program	3	Diet and Exercise	11
Counselling Corner	4	2007 Carers Gathering Review	12
ACAT Assessment Information	5	Community Outreach	13
Carers Calendar	6	Young Carers & Youth Week	14
Support Groups Diary	7	Noticeboard	15
Carers ACT Courses	8		

# Carers ACT From the CEO



## Who is Carers ACT?

Carers ACT provides information, counselling, respite, education and support for people who have taken on caring responsibilities. The role of Carers ACT is to participate in a partnership with Government, the non-Government sector, and the wider ACT community for the provision of better services, to improve the conditions under which Carers work and to increase recognition of Carers' contribution to the ACT community.

### Our Vision:

That Carers are recognised, valued and supported by Government and the community.

### Our Mission:

To enable and empower Carers in all their diversity to fulfil their role through provision of information, support, community education and advocacy, to lead change and be the 'voice' of Carers in the ACT.

### Contact Us:

#### Belconnen Office:

Ground Floor, Churches Centre,  
Benjamin Way, Belconnen ACT 2617  
Phone: 6296 9900 Fax: 6296 9999  
E-mail: [carers@carersact.asn.au](mailto:carers@carersact.asn.au)  
<http://www.carersact.asn.au>

#### Torrens Office:

1 Torrens Place, Torrens ACT 2607  
<http://www.carersact.asn.au>

**Commonwealth Carelink Centre**  
1800 052 222\*

**Commonwealth Carer Advisory Service** 1800 242 636\*

**Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre** 1800 059 059\*

\* An Australian Government Initiative.

Free local call. Mobile phones will be charged at mobile phone rates.

Patron Mr R J Cahill, OAM,  
Chief Magistrate

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### NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:

Friday 6 August 2007

Please send articles and items to  
[carers@carersact.asn.au](mailto:carers@carersact.asn.au)

Dear Members,

We are delighted to introduce a new respite program for Carers caring for a family member with mental illness. The Mental Health Respite Program will commence in May and will provide flexible and responsive respite tailored to the needs of the family.

The new Minister for Ageing, Christopher Pyne, launched the Employed Carers Program last month. This was the Minister's second official engagement. The Program provides a range of support options for employed Carers to enable them to continue to work while caring for a loved one. For further information please phone: 6296 9935 or use the link on our website: [www.carersact.asn.au](http://www.carersact.asn.au) & click on Employed Carers (under 'Programs').

In May the new Carers Legislation will come into effect in the ACT. In the Caring for Carers Plan for Action 2004-08, the ACT government undertook to review the current legislation position of Carers in the ACT and identify areas for legislative reform.

After extensive community consultation, the new legislation will make amendments to a number of Acts including the Discrimination Act 1991, the Guardianship and Management of Property Act 1991 and the Human Rights Commission Act 2005 – to better support Carers. For more information about these amendments go to our Website [www.carersact.asn.au](http://www.carersact.asn.au) and use the direct link. Carers ACT will continue to work with government to monitor and develop policy to improve the choices and support for Carers.

We are now developing our plans for next year and will be hosting a focus group of Carers who have recently used a variety of our services. We are keen to get feedback on how Carers think we can improve in delivering a better service to Carers, or to hear your thoughts on the new Carer legislation. Any ideas or comments would be welcomed and can be emailed to: [deem@carersact.asn.au](mailto:deem@carersact.asn.au) or contact me directly on 62969901.

Warm regards,  
Dee McGrath  
CEO

## INFORMATION RESOURCE

### The Carers ACT Library

Carers ACT has libraries at both our Belconnen and Torrens offices. The libraries are full of books and audiovisuals to assist you in your caring role and in your life in general. Our titles sit under categories including: Care and Carers, Self Help, Mental Health Conditions and Treatment, Medical Conditions and Treatment, Disabilities, Ageing and Loss and Grief. The library also provides internet access. Use of the library and internet facilities is free of charge and you will soon be able to browse our catalogue and borrow online. Watch the website: [www.carersact.asn.au](http://www.carersact.asn.au). If you would like more information, please call 6296 9900.

## CHRISTMAS IN JULY

Join us for a Christmas celebration in winter that includes traditional Christmas dinner, lots of dancing, singing, laughing and present from Santa.

This event is hosted in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation and the Mental Illness Fellowship.

WHEN: 6pm Friday, 27 July

WHERE: German Harmonie Club, 49 Jerrabomberra Avenue, Narrabundah

COST: \$40/\$30 (carer and consumer concession)

RSVP: to Mary Gays on 6230 7629 or [mary.gays@mhf.org.au](mailto:mary.gays@mhf.org.au) by Thursday, 19 July 2007

No one knows more about what it means to be a Carer than you do, so you can use the newsletter to share your story with other Carers who are in the same boat as you.

## I Wish Someone Had Told Me....

I have always dreaded the medical bill when my son had to see a specialist but I always paid it because I felt I had no choice. If I wanted my son to get his treatment, I had to pay the price... right? Wrong!

Last year I wrote to Medicare about the ridiculous Doctor's fees I had to pay regularly for my son's treatment. I told them that it was getting too much and I couldn't afford it. The reply to my letter was: "The Commonwealth Government has no power to control the fees that doctors charge. However,

doctors are often willing to negotiate a lower fee for those patients who are elderly, chronically ill or in difficult financial circumstances".

My son had to have an operation earlier this year. The anaesthetist for this operation wanted to charge \$1,400, for which I would be responsible for paying \$900 out-of-pocket.

I found out that this was because the anaesthetist was charging three times the Medicare scheduled fee. I

told him that it was too much, I could not afford it. His response was, "OK, we'll reduce the bill by \$300." \$300 for the price of a local phone call is a good deal!

This is sound advice. Everything is negotiable but we often don't think to ask - particularly medical professionals! Unfortunately, many people either don't know or don't have the courage to ask. Spread the word! I only wish someone had told me about this sooner!

## MENTAL HEALTH RESPITE PROGRAM

Carers ACT has received funding through the Department of Families, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs to provide a Mental Health Respite program. The aim of this project is to provide respite for Carers of people with a mental illness, a psychiatric disability or an intellectual disability. It will offer a flexible range of both planned and unplanned respite options tailored to the needs of carers, the care recipient and their family.

The secondary aim of this project is consultation and planning to identify issues around availability of appropriate respite services and to provide & propose local relevant options.

If you should require further information please contact Carers ACT on 62969900.

## Geoff's Story - Sailing to Sanity

Being a carer for a person with a mental illness is very taxing and tiring. I know it sounds stupid but I often find myself wishing that my son had a physical disability because then I could at least see the difficulties he is facing. However, I believe my strongest asset is my ability to be able to shield myself from becoming too involved. Having said that, it is very hard to let go of the regrets, the feelings of failure, the wishing "If only I had...", the isolation and shame associated with being a parent of a person with a mental illness.

One way for me to do this is to become involved in activities where I am forced to concentrate to the point where I find it very hard to think about what "I should be doing". I find hard physical activity is my solution, but as I get older it gets harder and I find I need new challenges for me to have a go at.

This, combined with the gentle but encouraging reminder from Carers ACT that I have to look after myself in order for me to be able to look after my son, means that I look for ways to do things for me.

An opportunity for me to do this came up in 2006 when I was accepted as a volunteer on the Dutch replica of the 400 year old Duyfken, a sailing ship which had the distinction of being the first European ship to map the northern coast of Australia.

The down side was that I would be at sea for 20 days, 5 of which I was unwell for, thrown around constantly, and always tired. I had no real idea of sailing, so I often felt confused and disorientated. This in itself gave me some idea of how a person with a mental illness must feel, except that they do not always realise what it is they are feeling. The work was hard. Hoisting (and lowering) sails as

they did it 400 years ago is very tough, we had no modern winches to help. Often this was done at night, which made it doubly hard, for obvious reasons.

There were times when out in the middle of the ocean, despite the fact that there were other people around, real feelings of loneliness came over me. Again, I could not help but identify with the plight of the mentally ill.

However, the overriding need to do the job at hand required a concentration that excluded every other thought. This meant that I was unable to spend any time thinking about what I could do to make things 'better' for my son.

When I finally got back to dry land I felt physically exhausted but mentally refreshed and confident that I was more able to focus, with a clearer mind, on caring for my son.

# Counselling Corner

## THE BENEFITS OF COUNSELLING



“So you know I’m not just ‘whistling Dixie’ on the subject of sadness and depression, I’ll tell you a truth.”

This was the first sentence of a letter we recently received. It was written by a carer who wanted to comment on the counselling she had received at Carers ACT. The letter went on to say: “Towards the end of 2005 I hit a wall in a big way. My then doctor said to me ‘Now this can’t go on. I know you don’t like taking pills but we really must try some chemical intervention. I can’t and won’t refer you for counselling unless you agree to try the medication.’ And I sat there nodding whilst privately thinking ‘well, blow you! If you won’t get me the counselling, I’ll get it myself.”

“And I did. From Carers ACT. And every fortnight I would see a very lovely, patient lady who let me sit there and cry unashamedly and let loose all the built up tension and rage and terror and sadness and uselessness that seemed to be filling my life.

“It was like lancing a boil. It was like putting down some of a heavy load that was breaking my strength. It was like being swept downstream and suddenly finding a tree to hang on to.

“So I’m still here and still hanging on to that tree and I don’t need to howl at the stars any more (except on occasion) or even to see the kind lady again (but I know the door is still open if I feel I need to knock).

“So that’s counselling for you and it’s really quite easy to do once you get into it.

“A relative once told me that she couldn’t believe that she told a stranger ‘all that stuff’. It was like opening a door and it all fell out. The operative word here is ‘stranger’. This stranger has no connection with your outside life or world. If they are skilled they are totally impartial and without any bias and should never be judgmental.

“So you might think about trying out a session or two”.

The letter contains many messages about the value of being able to talk through issues with an impartial listener, someone who is not emotionally involved. In counselling, the carer sets the agenda. In each session, they have an hour to explore the things they want to, without the concern of being judged and found wanting.

Skilled counselling allows for acceptance of what emerges moment by moment, with a movement towards a shared understanding of the issues. And, when understanding increases, what to do can become more apparent.

As our correspondent noted, there is often relief in being able to let go of a heavy load in this way. You may have been weighing up whether to make a counselling appointment, but there always seems to be some reason stopping you picking up the phone.

If you are feeling like you, too, have “hit a wall”, we encourage you to phone us on 1800 242 636 for an appointment.

## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Carers ACT will be providing Mental Health First Aid training to Carers of people with a mental illness or changed behaviour.

The course covers the mental health crisis situations of:

- suicidal behaviour/thoughts
- panic attack/acute stress reaction
- acute psychotic behaviour

The on-going mental health problems covered are:

- depression
- anxiety disorder
- gradual onset psychosis
- substance misuse

Strategies - the five steps in providing Mental Health First Aid are:

1. Assess risk of harm to person or others.
2. Listen non-judgmentally.
3. Give reassurance and information.
4. Encourage person to get appropriate professional help if needed.
5. Encourage self-help strategies.

The course takes 12 hours to complete and will be held at Carers ACT Belconnen.

**For the dates and times in May please contact Jeannine Koochew on :**

**6296 9912.**

If you have any particular questions or topics you would like covered in this new column “Counselling Corner”, please send it to Carers ACT or e-mail us at [carers@carersact.asn.au](mailto:carers@carersact.asn.au)

## **ACT Aged Care Assessment & Liaison Unit**

### **ACT Aged Care Assessment Team - ACAT**

The Aged Care Assessment Team provides aged care assessments for people who may need to access Australian Government Funded Aged Care Services, including approval for Community Aged Care Packages (CACP), Extended Aged Care at Home packages (EACH) and/or Residential care (permanent and/or respite) in Residential Aged Care facilities (Nursing Homes and Hostels) and other programs currently being offered.

#### **Eligibility Criteria**

Our target population is frail older persons 70 years and over (50 years if Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander). Persons outside this target group may also be eligible for services - please contact us to clarify. Assessment location must be within the ACT. All persons should be medically stable. As a minimum requirement, the person would require the level of care that is available in a "low level" hostel type environment at the time of the referral or within the next 12 months. Approvals to access Commonwealth funded Aged Care services are only current for 12 months. You will need to re-refer for an update to maintain approval status.

#### **How can I access the service?**

Referral to this service is via the Community Health Intake Line on 6207 9977. Referrals are then prioritised by the ACAT team according to the care needs of the client. Non-urgent clients are placed on the waiting list and will be contacted by an assessor to arrange an appointment time as they become available. Please note: ACAT is not a crisis service.

#### **What are the hours of operation?**

The Community Health Intake Line operates Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm (excluding public holidays). The ACAT unit operates Monday to Friday 8:30am – 5pm (excluding public holidays).

#### **What does service cost?**

There is no cost to use the service

#### **Are there any special needs prior to consultation?**

It may be helpful if a family member/carer can attend the assessment, particularly if they have Enduring Power of Attorney (EPOA).

#### **Do clients have to bring anything to the consultation?**

A list of current medications and any medical documents showing diagnosis or diseases is helpful. Enduring Power Of Attorney document if applicable.

#### **For information on Support Services or out of hours support contact:**

Commonwealth Carers Respite Centre -1800 059 059 or

Commonwealth Carelink Centre – 1800 052 222

## **MIFA SURVEY**

The Mental Illness Fellowship Australia (MIFA) is the country's biggest membership-based mental health organisation. It invites you to take part in a nationwide online survey about mental health in Australia.

In the lead up to the 2007 federal election MIFA has commissioned a nationwide survey asking people to rate their key federal mental health issues. The answers will be summarised, publicised and taken to key political parties for their written response leading up to the 2007 election.

The aim is to tell Federal politicians how Australians feel about mental health issues that are a federal responsibility. The survey takes 10 minutes, can be entirely anonymous and is open to anyone with something to say on mental health. If you can spare 10 minutes for mental health visit: [www.mifa.org.au](http://www.mifa.org.au)

# Carers Calendar

May - June - July



## Walking Group

Join us for some exercise, time out and some good conversation!

### 10am Tuesday 8 May

Meet in front of National Museum of Australia – main entrance (Lawson Crescent, Acton Peninsula) for a walk around the Lake Burley Griffin towards Black Mountain Peninsula, follow by a hot drink

### 10am Tuesday 12 June

Meet in Bugden Avenue Car Park (opposite of the church) for a Fadden Pines walk, follow by cup of tea, coffee or hot chocolate

### 10am Tuesday 10 July

Meet in the Cooleman Court Car Park, next to McDonald's Fast Food for a walk around Weston Creek follow by a cuppa

For more information please contact Michaela on 6296 9917 or [michaelaa@carersact.asn.au](mailto:michaelaa@carersact.asn.au)

## Craft Group

### 10am - 2pm Thursday 24 May at Carers ACT Belconnen

Come and learn how to create your own beautiful scarves.  
- Bookings are essential!

### 10am - 2pm Thursday 28 June at Carers ACT Belconnen

Bring your own unfinished art and craft and join us in a friendly atmosphere.

### 10am - 2pm Thursday 26 July at Carers ACT Belconnen

Join us for scrap booking class or simply bring your own unfinished art and craft along

For more information please contact Michaela on 6296 9917 or [michaelaa@carersact.asn.au](mailto:michaelaa@carersact.asn.au)



## Art Appreciation Group

### 10am Tuesday 15 May

Tools and Techniques of Printmaking - Jenny Manning  
Meet in front of the NGA

### 10am Tuesday 19 June

VIP: very important photographs from the European, American and Australian photography collection 1840's- 1940's  
Meet in front of the NGA

### 10am Tuesday 17 July

George Lambert retrospective  
Heroes and icons  
Meet in front of the NGA

For more information contact Michaela on 6296 9917 or [michaelaa@carersact.asn.au](mailto:michaelaa@carersact.asn.au)

## International Museums Day Private Viewing at the NGA – The Printed Image

9:30am Saturday 19 May

Meet in front of the main entrance of the National Gallery of Australia, Parkes

Bookings essential for complimentary ticket please contact Michaela by Monday 14 May on 6296 9917 or via email [michaelaa@carersact.asn.au](mailto:michaelaa@carersact.asn.au)

## Autumn Seasonal Lunch

### 12:30pm – 2:30pm Thursday 7 June at Carers ACT Belconnen

RSVP: To Michaela by Friday, 1 June on 6296 9917 or via email [michaelaa@carersact.asn.au](mailto:michaelaa@carersact.asn.au).

- Bookings are essential, lunch provided

## Christmas in July

### 6:00pm Friday 27 July

German Harmonie Club,  
49 Jerrabomberra Avenue,  
Narrabundah

Cost: \$40/\$30 (carer and consumer concession)

RSVP: to Mary Gays on 6230 7629 or [mary.gays@mhf.org.au](mailto:mary.gays@mhf.org.au) by Thursday, 19 July 2007

## Singing Group Ideas Meeting

10.30–12.30pm Wed, 30 May

Carers ACT is looking at setting up an informal singing group to allow Carers to get together to sing for pleasure. Singers of all abilities and experience are invited to come along.

The group will be led by Judith Clingan– one of Canberra's most well known musical identities.

If you are interested in possibly joining a singing group you are invited to an initial meeting to discuss ideas at the Carers ACT Belconnen office

Please call Jill to let her know you are coming on: 6296 9913

## Laughter Yoga

1.30 - 2.30pm Wed 18 July

Are you interested in joining some laughter yoga sessions for Carers? The first yoga session will be held in the meeting room at Carers ACT Belconnen Office.

Laughter Yoga was established 11 years ago in India by Dr. Madan Kataria. Now there are around 5,500 Laughter Clubs worldwide.

Laughter Yoga sessions run for about 30 minutes and involve a variety of techniques incorporating deep breathing, stretching and playful exercises to support and encourage natural, spontaneous laughter. One minute of hearty laughter is equal to 10 minutes on a rowing machine – and it burns up 3 ½ calories!

So come along and do something good for your body and your soul. Please call Jill on 6296 9913 by Friday 13th July to register your interest

# Support Groups Diary



## Bereaved Carers Social Group

10.30-12.00

Wed 23 May Calthorpes House

Wed 27 Jun Beaver Gallery,  
Deakin

Wed 25 Jul National Library

Please contact Jill on 6296 9913

## Carers of a Person with a Disability

10am - 12noon at Carers ACT

Belconnen

Wed 2 May Open discussion

Wed 6 Jun Open discussion

Wed 4 Jul Open discussion

## Inner North Carers Support Group

10am - 12noon

Function Room, Majura Community  
Centre, Rosevear Place, Dickson

Fri 18 May Goal Setting

Fri 15 Jun Managing Anxiety

Fri 20 Jul Open discussion

## Male Carers Support Group

1am - 1:30pm Canberra

Southern Cross Yacht Club, Lounge,  
Lotus Bay, Yarralumla

Tue 22 May Group meeting

Tue 19 Jun Group meeting

Tue 24 Jul Group meeting

## Northside Carers Support Group

10am - 12noon

Belconnen Community Centre,  
Room 2, Swanson Court, Belconnen

Wed 2 May Managing Depression

Wed 6 Jun Open discussion

Wed 4 Jul Managing Anxiety

## Southside Carers Support Group

10:30am - 12noon

Weston Creek Community Centre,  
Parkinson St, Weston (next to  
Cooleman Court Shopping Centre)

Tues 1 May Open discussion

Tues 5 Jun Managing Depression

Tues 3 Jul Open discussion

## Tuggeranong Carers Support Group

1:30pm - 3pm

Tuggeranong Community Centre,  
245 Cowlshaw St, Tuggeranong

Mon 14 May Managing Depression

Mon 11 June Open discussion

Mon 9 July Goal setting

## Arabic Support Group

12pm - 2pm

Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre  
North Building, London Circuit, Civic

Tues 8 May Stress Management

Tues 12 June Respite Planning

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Chinese Support Group

10am - 12noon

Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre

North Building, London Circuit, Civic

Wed 2 May Money Matters

Wed 6 Jun Mental Health

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Croatian & Spanish Support Group

12pm - 2pm

Training Room, Carers ACT,

Belconnen

Mon 14 May Stress Management

Mon 11 Jun NO MEETING (QB)

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Filipino Support Group

1pm - 3pm

Canberra Museum and Gallery, North  
Building, Ground Floor, 180 London  
Circuit, Civic

Sat 5 May Respite Planning

Sat 2 Jun Mental Health

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Greek Support Group

10am - 12pm

Orpheus Room, Hellenic Club,  
Matilda Street, Woden

Thurs 10 May Respite Planning

Thurs 14 Jun Bereavement

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Hungarian Support Group

11am - 1pm

Polish Australian White Eagle Club,  
34 David St, Turner

Wed 16 May Stress Management

Wed 20 June Money matters

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Indigenous Carers Support Group

10am - 2pm Boomanulla Oval,

Goyder Street, Narrabundah

Thurs 24 May Open Discussion

Thurs 21 June Open Discussion

Mon 9 July Elders NAIDOC group

## Indian Support Group

12noon - 2pm

Canberra Museum and Gallery, North  
Building, Ground Floor, 180 London  
Circuit, Civic

Sat 12 May Bereavement

Sat 9 Jun Footsure

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Italian Support Group

10:30am - 12noon

Italo-Australian Club,  
78 Franklin St, Forrest

Fri 4 May Footsure

Fri 1 June Money Matters

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Mon Support Group

12noon - 2pm

Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre  
North Building, London Circuit, Civic

No meeting in February

Thurs 3 May Bereavement

Thurs 7 Jun Respite Planning

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Polish Support Group

11am - 1pm

Polish Australian White Eagle Club,  
34 David St, Turner

Wed 16 May Stress Management

Wed 20 June Money matters

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Sudanese Support Group

12noon - 2pm

Canberra Museum and Gallery, North  
Building, Ground Floor, 180 London  
Circuit, Civic

Sat 26 May Footsure

Sat 23 Jun Stress Management

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Tamil Support Group

11am - 1pm

Tamil Aged Care Home, 11 Bromby  
St, Isaacs

Sat 19 May Bereavement

Sat 16 Jun Respite Planning

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Tongan Support Group

12noon - 2pm

Mt Rogers Community Centre, 55  
Crofts Crescent Spence

Fri 25 May Money matters

Fri 29 Jun Bereavement

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

## Vietnamese Support Group

10am - 12noon

Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre  
North Building, London Circuit, Civic

Wed 9 May Respite Crisis Plan

Wed 13 Jun Stress Management

No meeting in July -Winter Event TBA

# Carers ACT Courses

your wellbeing, understanding, coping skills

## Money Matters Seminar for Carers

This 2.5 hour seminar will ensure you know about all financial entitlements available to both yourself and care recipient. A Centrelink Financial Officer and a representative from the Australian Tax Office will be on hand as guest speakers to answer your questions Refreshments provided.

Northside seminar:

2.0pm – 4.30pm Tuesday, 29 May

Carers ACT Belconnen Training Room

Southside seminar:

10.0am – 12.30pm Monday, 21 May

Woden Library Community Room (Verandah Room)

RSVP: Bookings essential. Please contact Jill Pierce on 6296 9913 or [jillp@carersact.asn.au](mailto:jillp@carersact.asn.au)

## Stress Management for family Carers

Exploring ways to manage the challenges and stresses in life. Session content will be flexible to meet the needs of Carers and may include:

- Recognising when we are stressed and identifying our stressors

- Management strategies

Maintaining balance in our lives

- Relaxation techniques

Three Monday afternoons :

1.30pm– 3.30pm, May 14th

1.30pm– 3.30pm, May 21st

1.30pm– 3.30pm, May 28th

At Tuggeranong Community Centre, Cowlshaw St, Tuggeranong

RSVP: Bookings essential. Please contact Jill Pierce on 6296 9913 or [jillp@carersact.asn.au](mailto:jillp@carersact.asn.au)

## Life Writing Workshops for family Carers

Gerrie Mackey is running a series of six writing workshops for Carers. No writing experience needed. Gerrie will stimulate your creativity and start you on the road to writing about your life.

Gerrie Mackey is a freelance writer and teacher. She specialises in parenting, relationships and social issues. She occasionally runs Life Writing classes through the Canberra Writer's Centre, and Carers ACT.

When: Thursdays, 1pm - 3pm

26th July — 2nd August

Where: Room 2, Weston Creek Community Centre, Parkinson St, Weston

For more information or to register please contact Jill Pierce on 6296 9913 or [jillp@carersact.asn.au](mailto:jillp@carersact.asn.au)

## Seasons for Growth

Carers ACT is offering an introductory session on change, loss and grief. This session will be helpful for Carers who are experiencing loss and change in their lives. Carers are invited to this introductory session on Thursday May 10th.

A further four weekly sessions will also be offered on the four following Thursdays in which participants can think about and work with their own loss experiences in a group environment. Seasons for Growth is a national organisation well known for its work with adults and children in assisting them to understand and manage their grief.

When: 5 sessions across 5 weeks

Thursdays, 10.30 - 2.30pm

From 10 May to 7 June

Where: Belconnen Carers ACT  
54 Benjamin Way, Belconnen, 2617

For more information or to RSVP: Please contact Jill Pierce on 6296 9913 or [jillp@carersact.asn.au](mailto:jillp@carersact.asn.au)

- Places limited!

## Carers Labyrinth Workshop at Rachum

This will be an opportunity for some restorative peace and quiet, a chance to reflect on your personal or spiritual journey or just time out in the country to experience a labyrinth walk.

During the workshop there will be an introduction about the labyrinth; guidelines for walking the labyrinth; meditation and time for personal reflection and walking the labyrinth; a chance to soak in the beauty of the landscape.

10am to 3pm Thursday, 23rd August

Meet at Belconnen Markets at 9.20am

RSVP: Please contact Jill Pierce on 6296 9913 or [jillp@carersact.asn.au](mailto:jillp@carersact.asn.au) by Friday August 16th -places limited!

Transport to the Belconnen Markets can be arranged

## Managing the Caring Role

7-9pm Tuesdays, July 31st- September 18th

Erindale Community Education Program

Erindale College

McBryde Cres.

Wanniassa, Canberra, 2903

Carers can choose to attend individual workshops or undertake the full 8 sessions.

The two hour units are

- Carers and Caring
- Taking care of yourself
- Relationships
- Feelings
- Creative Approaches
- Carers health and well being
- Money Matters
- Legal Matters

To register please contact Jill Pierce on 6296 9913 or [jillp@carersact.asn.au](mailto:jillp@carersact.asn.au)

## A Carer Shares their Experience with Respite

### Marissa's Respite Experience

**Q: How long had you been caring before you accessed respite?**

*My baby was born premature and was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis. She was in hospital for the first 3 months of her life. When she came home with me she was constantly crying and coughing, I got absolutely no sleep at all. After two straight weeks without sleep, finally someone said to me 'why don't you get some respite?'*

**Q: What stopped you from accessing respite before this time?**

*I did not know what was available, what I was entitled to or how to access it. I just didn't think of it.*

**Q: What finally made you decide to access respite?**

*I finally accessed the respite on someone's suggestion because I was at the end of my tether. I could no longer cope with caring for my daughter without sleep.*

**Q: How did you feel about it when the day came to receive your respite?**

*When the day came to receive my first respite I was grateful, a little nervous*

*but also a little frustrated. I had in home respite and the man that came to relieve me was used to dealing with the frail aged and was not used to babies. He would not touch my daughter, let alone pick her up because she made him uncomfortable. I did not get any rest at all.*

*Despite my bad first experience, I continued to access respite but got the services of a nurse experienced in paediatrics instead.*

**Q: What did you do during this time?**

*Initially I used this time to catch up on my sleep. I now use in home respite so that I can work from home.*

**Q: How did you feel afterwards?**

*It was a relief to finally get some sleep so that I could properly care for my daughter.*

**Q: How did your baby feel about it?**

*My baby was initially a bit distressed when I left her with the care worker but now she is quite used to and comfortable with her care workers.*

**Q: Would you access it again?**

*I continue to get regular respite to allow*

*me to work from home. Without respite I would not be able to bring an income into our household.*

**Q: What advice do you have for other carers about respite?**

*I have three pieces of advice:*

*Firstly, find out what is available and what you are entitled to because respite options will vary according to your circumstances. Some respite services will not do things like administering medications and some options available to you have a cost associated, with some more expensive than others, so really do your research to find the one that fits best with your needs.*

*Secondly, don't always plan to leave your family member with the respite worker for the first time. You and your cared for person should take the time to feel comfortable with the person providing the respite care.*

*Finally, you may have had bad respite experiences before you have good ones.*

To find out about your respite options contact Michelle Curley on 1800 242 636

### Patients, Carers, Families and Friends Pages have now been launched on CareSearch

Palliative care will affect all of us at some stage in our lives whether as a patient, carer, family member, neighbour or friend yet many of us do not have a clear understanding of what palliative care means. When an illness cannot be cured, the focus of care changes to helping patients have the best quality of life possible while managing their symptoms. Palliative care maintains quality of life by addressing physical symptoms such as pain or nausea as well as helping with emotional, spiritual and social needs.

There are many issues that arise when dealing with a life limiting illness. On 26th March, new pages were launched on CareSearch providing information and links to trustworthy sites and organisations that may help you.

The pages are not intended to replace the care or advice of your health professionals. They provide a set of resources that may help you learn more and access materials that could help you manage better.

There are pages specific to patients providing information on varied palliative care topics such as living with illness, having difficult conversations and feelings and emotions. There are also resources directed specifically towards carers and for families and friends.

For further information, visit: <http://www.caresearch.com.au/home/Patientscarers/tabid/493/Default.aspx> today!

### GE Shaw Fundraising

In March, GE Shaw & Associates held a lawn bowls fundraising event for Carers ACT. The event raised \$37,000.

Some of the funding was put towards making the Carers Gathering a success. The rest will be used to maximise respite services for Family Carers in the ACT

Carers ACT wishes to thank GE Shaw for the valuable contribution and continued support for Family Carers



# Money Matters

## Centrelink Payments for Carers

If you are caring and not currently receiving any financial assistance from Centrelink, you may be entitled to it. Keep reading to find out what kinds of payments are available.

Payments when you are caring for a child are available through either:

- **A Carer Allowance (child)** - a supplementary payment for people who care for a child with a disability or severe medical condition at home.

- **A Carer Payment (child)** - an income support payment for people who cannot support themselves through participation in the workforce while caring for a child with a profound disability who has extremely high care needs.

Payments when you are caring for an adult (over 16 years of age) are available through either:

- **A Carer Allowance (adult)** - a supplementary payment for people who care for an adult with a disability, severe medical condition or who is frail aged at home.

- **A Carer Payment (adult)** - an income support payment for people who cannot support themselves through participation in the workforce while caring for someone with a disability, severe medical condition or who is frail aged.

Assistance with Accommodation and Renting Issues is also available, including:

- **Crisis Payment** - to help if you are in severe financial hardship.

- **Reconnect Program** - community based early intervention services aimed at young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

- **Rent Assistance** - to help with the cost of renting privately.

- **Rent Deduction Scheme** - a service that voluntarily deducts housing payments for customers in public housing.

- **Residential Care** - assists new residents in residential aged care who may need help to cover living expenses.

Conditions apply for all types of carer payments, so to find out if you are eligible, contact Centrelink Disability, Sickness and Carers on 13 2717, visit [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au) or visit your nearest Centrelink Office.

Centrelink also offers:

- **Employment Preparation Service** - a voluntary program available to people returning to work when they have been out of the workforce for two years or more because of their caring responsibilities.

## The Carers ACT Deakin Respite Cottage Gets a Makeover

The Carers ACT Respite Cottage in Deakin provides a home from home respite program for carers 65 years and over (50 years and over if Indigenous) of people with dementia and changed behaviours.

The focus of the Respite Cottage is to provide flexible, day, overnight and host family respite for carers through evidence based care of those with dementia in a home-like environment. Care periods also take into consideration gender, cultural backgrounds, and changed behaviour issues.

For many families "The Cottage" has provided a nurturing environment for the people that they love. The program has played a vital role in sustaining the carer in their role and assisting them to keep the person with dementia at home.

Over the last two months, the Cottage has been transformed with many exciting renovations taking place. Firstly the carpet was replaced with new flooring and two weeks ago the interior of the Cottage was completely repainted. Pauline and Clare have chosen lovely new furnishings and rugs to complement the Cottage interior, along with a new dishwasher and oven.

There has been plenty happening outside too. A gardener has revamped the gardens and planted several new shrubs. The greenhouse has been constructed and is ready for use and the bird aviary is also completed and is now home to four beautiful budgies.

Jenny, a music therapist, comes every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. Visitors and staff are immensely enjoying her music sessions.

Although there have been a few disruptions over the last couple of months, visitors to the Cottage, their families and the staff are all enjoying the "new" look Cottage.

Report from Cottage Staff, contact: 6285 2082

# Staying Strong, Fit & Healthy

## The Importance of Good Diet and Exercise- Tips

Looking after your health is important so that you are able to care for your loved ones.

Regular physical activity and a healthy diet are vital for anyone to maintain good health. It is particularly important for carers as it boosts your energy levels, helps to fight illness and will help to lower your stress levels.

## Good Food Guide

A well balanced diet includes food from each of the food groups every day. The general recommended daily diet is:

- One to two serves of protein—meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts and legumes.
- Three serves of dairy — milk, yoghurt and cheese.
- Five serves of a variety of carbohydrates — bread, cereals, rice, pasta and noodles.
- Seven serves of fruit and vegetables — two fruit and five vegies.
- Fluids — 6 to 8 serves of water, cordial, fruit juice or milk.

Remember: It is good to reduce fat, sugar and salt and limit alcohol.

## Let's Get Physical

Exercise can reduce the likelihood of illness, improve strength, balance and endurance, and improve heart and lung functioning. Exercise has also shown to have beneficial effects on the stress levels and sleep quality, and helps to boost your energy levels.

The Heart Foundation recommends that people do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking, most days. This exercise can be in 10-minute blocks throughout the day. Muscle-strengthening exercise, or strength training, is important for maintaining muscle and bone mass and increasing the metabolic rate. This means doing exercises with light weights or dumbbells.

## Tips & Ideas:

- Get into a routine of exercising, daily if you can
- Take up a gentle exercise like Tai Chi, Yoga, swimming, walking or using an exercise bike indoors
- Contact your local Community Centre about exercise classes
- Play a sport that you enjoy - golf, bowls, tennis
- Do some gardening
- Have a medical check up before starting a new exercise program
- Stop exercising and seek medical advice if you have pain in your chest or feel dizzy
- Start slowly with any new exercise routine and get professional advice if unsure of how to begin.
- Be aware of safety, use correct footwear and protective equipment



## YMCA of Canberra PrYme Movers

### Physical Activity Programs for Older People

The YMCA of Canberra is a not for profit community organisation that provides programs for people aged 1 to 100. These are mainly physical activity programs.

An important aspect of these programs is the PrYme Mover program, which began in 1985 with two classes and a handful of people.

There are now 83 classes per week offered in 26 Canberra locations, mainly in church halls and community centres.

The programs the YMCA offers for older people all focus on “functional” fitness – being able to carry out every day tasks easily and with energy, improvement in health and the reduction of the risks for falls. To this end, most of the exercises focus on developing strength and balance.

All the instructors are well trained and supervised, classes are small and friendly and there is always time for a chat and a cuppa after the class.

The cost of attending class is kept as low as possible and for most programs is \$6.50 per session—pay as you come. There is funding available through the fundraising efforts of the YMCA Auxiliary for those people who have difficulty meeting that cost.

The YMCA never turns anyone away. We know of what a benefit these classes can be and we don't want to exclude anyone.

There's bound to be a program in your local area. For information please phone the YMCA on 62306224 or check the web on [www.canberra.ymca.org.au](http://www.canberra.ymca.org.au). Make some enquiries today!

# 2007 Carers Gathering

## "A Tropical Getaway"

In March we had our biennial Carers Gathering at Rydges Eaglehawk. The resort was transformed into a tropical paradise, or that's what we were encouraged to believe! It certainly looked that way with Carers and staff wearing Hawaiian shirts and covered in colourful leis.

The biggest decision that Carers had to make was, what, if any, activity they were going to participate in. Would they take part in the jewellery making or play tennis, attend stress management and relaxation classes or make a mini album in the scrap booking session? Would they go for a swim, have a spa or learn how to do mosaics? And this was only day one!

These were some of the options that Carers were offered. However if they preferred, they could simply sit and mediate in the bush surroundings, (whoops, I meant tropical surroundings) read a book or talk to other Carers.

Friday Night saw the "beach area" come alive with palm trees and Samoan dancers, with a very impressive HAKA by some of the male members of the Gathering. There was an enormous amount of laughter and we discovered the amazing dancing abilities and stamina of some of our members!!! It was a fabulous night full of fun.

The weather on day two was once again kind to us. Bush walking proved to be a popular activity, as did the 'Balancing Work, Family and Caring' session. Some Carers made wonderful creations in the Scarf Making workshop and others took a sensory adventure whilst learning about Aromatherapy for Self Care.

In the mosaic session two large terracotta pots were decorated with colourful pieces of tile, a stunning effect, with some Carers very keen to see the project through to the end. It may take a few more sessions back at the ranch (Belco!) over the coming months for this project to be fully

completed. The decorated pots will then find welcome homes at Carers ACT Respite Cottages!.

We hope that the Carers Gathering was a wonderful opportunity for Carers to take time out from their caring role and to explore new ways of looking after themselves through the educational and fun activities. We also hope that the Carers Gathering enabled Carers to reconnect with old friends, make new ones and leave feeling revitalised and recommitted to caring for themselves and the person they care for.

Carers ACT staff felt privileged to be able to share this experience with the Carers we work for. We all look forward to the next one!

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Here are some comments from the event evaluation forms:

*"It was the first time ever I have been away from the family. Thank you!"*

*"Great program – wonderful variation in activities, fabulous opportunity to try something new."*

*"It was great to share a room with someone I had never met before – I had a wonderful time talking and sharing experiences. Thanks for a great time"*

*"I have never been able to attend anything like this before"*

*"It was wonderful to be 'me' again."*

*"A great idea for Carers to really get away from everything."*

*"I came primarily for relaxation and I achieved it!"*

*"Gathering was excellent. It was good to meet up with Carers from previous Gatherings"*

*"I did what I felt like doing, I was nurturing and caring for myself."*

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# Community Outreach



Hello to All.

My name is Annemarie Ashton and I am the new Community Outreach Coordinator for Carers ACT.

My role is primarily to be both a speaker and a listener on behalf of Carers ACT throughout the community. This means that many of you may see or hear me promoting the range of programs and services offered by Carers ACT.

While out and about, I will be gathering information on service changes and new programs to ensure that Carers ACT has the latest information on all available services. My listening role also means that I will be helping to identify current and future community needs, to assist Carers ACT in its goal of supporting family carers. Liaison with various networks is an important part of my work, as I create and maintain links with other service providers in the ACT to help improve access points and service pathways for carers.

I have worked directly in support and advocacy services with family carers since 2001, when my own son was diagnosed with a disability. For the last five years I was the President of Second Step, the South West Autism Support Group in Western Australia, and assisted with setting up the South West Disability Coalition in 2005. The highlight of my work was representing the region at the World Autism Congress in South Africa last year, where I presented information on regional support services and network development. I have extensive experience in policy work and program development, particularly in the areas of disability, health and community services. I hold a Bachelor of Creative Industries (Communications and Culture) and have completed First Class Honours by research, investigating media representations of disability and its effect on public perceptions.

I have recently moved to Canberra, from Bunbury in Western Australia, with my two children. We are very much enjoying discovering all that the region has to offer.

**Please don't hesitate to call me on 6296 9943 for a chat.**

## AND YET.

I feel your hand, no longer soft -  
now corns and calluses and dark brown spots -  
And yet I love you more.

I see your eyes, no longer wide with hope  
surrounded by wrinkles as you  
strive to cope with memory loss -  
And yet I love you more.

I hear your voice now shaky with the years,  
Where it once was vibrant  
and soothing to the ear.  
And yet I love you more.

I taste the meals you can no longer cook.  
Now it's "take-ways", not prize recipes  
from your well thumbed book.  
And yet I love you more.

I smell the perfume of the flowers  
with which you filled the lounge  
No perfume now  
where plastic flowers abound.  
And yet I love you more.

By Peter Naughton



# Young Carers Get Involved in National Youth Week

## Young Carers Join a Dragon Boat Race in the Spirit of National Youth Week

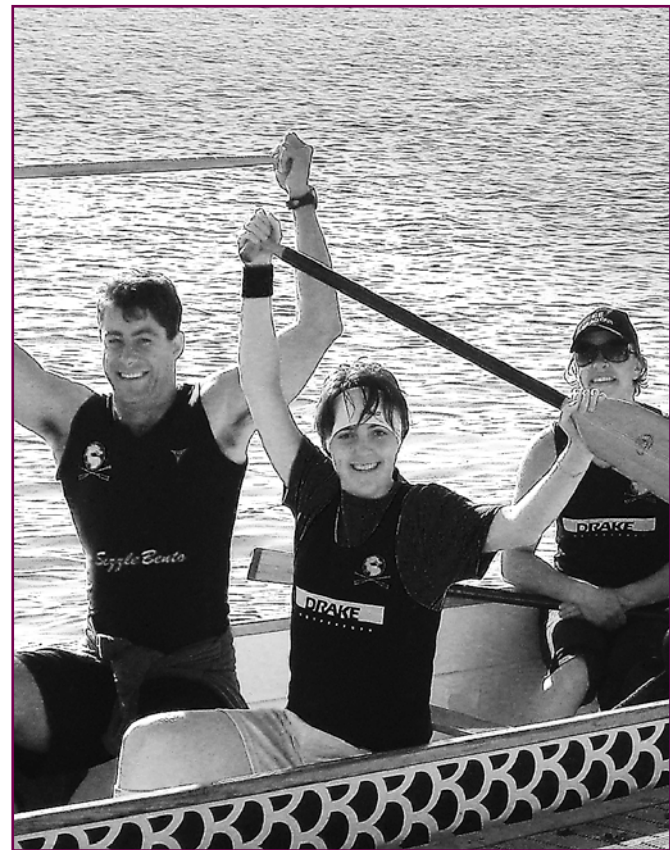
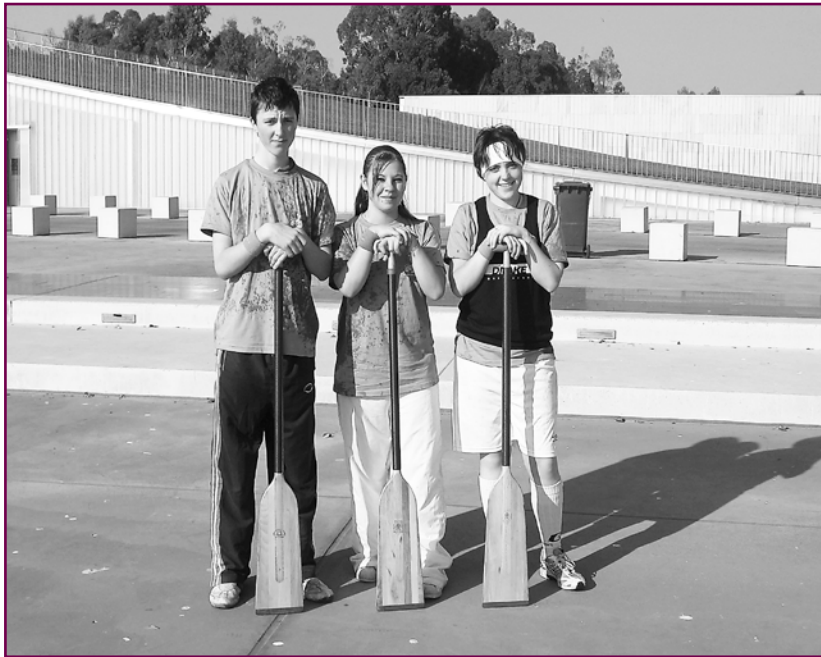
Three Young Carers got up bright and early on Friday, 13th April to get involved in the launch of Youth Week at Commonwealth Park, Lake Burley Griffin.

Before the launch, Josh Haines, Tammara Haines and Skye Rubino joined teams of several other Young Canberrans to get involved in the Dragon Boat race on the lake.

As they got into the spirit of competition, the splash back from their vigorous rowing meant they ended up quite wet!

After the race, Minister Scullion made the official launch and Josh, Tammara and Skye joined in a healthy breakfast of fruit, yogurt, muesli and muffins, and took the time to make some new friends.

It was a glorious morning down by the lake and fun was had by all involved. Here are some photos from the event...



## 1 in 100 - a play

'1 in 100' is a play to be performed in Canberra throughout June. Written by a Canberra born writer Mary Rachel Brown, after extensive consultations with mental health care providers, it is the story of Simon and his mother Sue, and their battle to maintain their relationship when Simon develops schizophrenia.

The play focuses on the inner world of Simon's altered perception and loss of self, and Sue's grief and her questions of self-blame. It is hoped '1 in 100' will help to increase community understanding of, and compassion for, sufferers of mental illness and their carers.

'1 in 100' stars Tracy Mann (AFI Best Actress and Logie award winner) and brilliant young actor, Lindsay Farris as Simon.

### Performance details:

6th June to 23rd June 2007 @ 8pm

Matinees: Wed 13th & 20th @ 11am, Sat 23rd June @ 2pm

Bookings: 6247 1223 or [www.thestreet.org.au](http://www.thestreet.org.au)

All performances at The Street Theatre, Childers Street, Canberra City

## Equipment For Sale

1. Hoist, Pro-med Elf patient lifter. 127kg high lift pivot frame, manual adjustable base, emergency lowering switch, battery and onboard charger. \$1,600
2. Pro-med Elf mesh pivoting slings - 2 Small. Suit child. \$150 each
3. Gizmo folding tilt-in-space child's wheelchair. Suit 6-10 year old. Swingaway foot rests, flipdown knee support, lateral swingaway thoracic supports, multi-adjustable headrest, shoulder harness, 4-point hip belt, incontinence liner, swingaway anti-tippers. Blue Stardust colour. \$4,000
3. McLaren Major Buggy with sun canopy. Lightweight folding buggy takes up to 50 kg. Navy. \$480
4. Horacek Kimba tilt-in-space folding pushchair and highchair. Size 2 (ages 4-10). Integrated headrest, groinstrap, grabrail, four-point belt, thorax pads, abduction block, sun/rain roof, raincape, basket. \$1,000
5. Change table for larger child. Padded. 150cm (L) x 65cm (W) x 85cm (H). Wheels at one end. Shelves underneath. Pale grey and white. \$250
6. Hospital bed. Manual wind-up. Limited angle and height adjustability. \$100
7. Powerlink Switch operated appliance controller. Momentary, Timed Seconds, Timed Minutes and Latching output operation. \$150
8. Baby Monitor, Roger Armstrong Sleep EasyLight & Sound Monitor. Belt-clip, long range, two channels, light display showing intensity of sounds, nightlight. \$50

For more information or enquiry please contact Carolyn Paisley-Dew on:

Phone: 02 6297 6682 (home) or 02 6244 1613 (work)

Email: [cdew1@optusnet.com.au](mailto:cdew1@optusnet.com.au)

## Wherever You Go, There You Are

By Jon Kabat-Zin

Do you find yourself agonising over the past or constantly worrying about the future instead of enjoying the richness and diversity of the present moment?

Wherever You Go, There You Are shows how the simple technique and practice of mindfulness can keep us in touch with the reality of the here and now, hopefully bringing stillness, self understanding and wisdom into our lives. Mindfulness means being in touch, awake and aware of the present moment using our five sense and listening to our hearts.

The book is written in three sections: The Bloom of the Present Moment, The Heart of the Practice, and In the Spirit of Mindfulness. Within each section are short, easy to read and easy to understand chapters full of formal and informal practice ideas on how to start the practice of mindful meditation. It is not prescriptive. Kabat Zinn questions the readers' motives for meditating and in each chapter there is a TRY section. For example: 'Try seeing your own life this very day as a journey and as an adventure. Where are you going? What are you seeking? Where are you now?' (p. 91).

As a carer, I have tried these techniques of Mindful Meditation and it has helped me become calmer, more still and insightful, enabling me to cope more effectively with the stressful times experienced.

It is a book that can be read and re-read and each time a new gem of wisdom reveals itself. Well worth browsing.

Review by Coralie Amos



## Who is Carers ACT?

### Board of Management

President: Brett Walker  
 Vice President and Carers Australia Delegate: Janet Moore  
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## KEEP IN TOUCH!

Three months between newsletter issues is such a long time! How can you keep up with all of the events and information about Carers ACT?

**You can log on to our website  
[www.carersact.asn.au](http://www.carersact.asn.au)**

to find out what events and activities we have planned for the next few weeks as well as all our news to keep you in the loop between newsletters.



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