



Carers ACT Extends Open Hours for Carers



Central to what we do is to meet the needs of Carers, to the best of our ability and within available resources. Through a number of recent surveys, focus groups and other forms of evaluation, a number of Carers told us they need to have greater access to our services and supports. Some programs have offered flexible hours for some time, especially our educational workshops, counselling and social events. In addition Fraser House (respite for Carers of adults with disabilities) is open 24/7 and the Cottage at Deakin is open six days and nights, with flexibility to include Sundays for emergencies. Carers ACT also operates the Commonwealth Respite Centre 1800 line - available 24/7. However, all staff have agreed that they will be even more flexible with their work hours to better meet your needs.

We are delighted to advise that, effective 8th November, the Carers ACT Belconnen Office will be open every Saturday from 9am until noon. So, if you are a Carer who finds it difficult to access our services mid week, due to work or other commitments, and would prefer to discuss your individual needs face to face with one of our coordinators, make an appointment to see us on a Saturday soon by calling 62969900.

Supports available on Saturday mornings will include:

- intake and assessments for respite or other support program

- problem solving - helping you find information on accessing community or government services, or assisting you with any other issues of concern
- assistance in completing Centrelink forms to access Carer Payment or Allowance
- confidential counselling
- access to library & internet facilities

Opening Times Over Christmas and New Year

Our Belconnen and Torrens Offices, will be closed over the Christmas period, as follows:

- Thursday 25th December
- Friday 26th December
- Saturday 27th December
- Thursday 1st January
- Saturday 3rd January

Fraser House and The Cottage will be closed from Tuesday 23rd December to Monday 5th January.

Carers ACT's Commonwealth Respite Centre will still be available for respite emergency needs throughout the holiday period on 1800 059 059 24 hours a day, every day. Carers needing emergency counselling please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14.

We would encourage Carers to plan respite that may be needed through the holiday period in advance. Call one of our coordinator at the Respite Centre today on 1800 059 059.



IN THIS ISSUE	
From the CEO	2
I wish someone had told me	3
Policy Update	4
AGM details	5
Carers Calendar	6
Workshops	7
Support groups diary	8
Managing someone's medicines	9
Carers Week 2008	12
Notice board	15

From the CEO

Dear Members,

It's hard to believe the year is almost coming to a close. But what a great year it has been! The past few months have been particularly eventful with almost 300 Carers actively engaged in the National Inquiry to Better Support for Carers and the ACT Election Carers Campaign. These forums have been impressive and have had a strong impact on helping government understand how to improve the system to better support Carers in the ACT. We are delighted to announce a new program for Carers of someone with a mental illness, who would like to be more actively engaged in having their voices heard by government and affecting positive change in the mental health service system in the ACT. See page 10 for more information.

Continuous improvement is central to what we do and we are pleased to be able to extend some of our services to Carers by opening from 9am to 12noon on Saturdays. This initiative is in direct response to many Carers in our survey and other focus groups who told us they want more flexible and extended access to our services. We hope you will take the opportunity to avail yourself of this service. If you know a neighbour, work colleague or friend who is also in a caring role and doesn't have time mid week to make contact with us, encourage them to come in and have a chat on Saturdays.

One of my favourite articles in the newsletter is "I WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME". Carers tell me, often after years of caring, that they had accidentally come across valuable community services that are either new or have been available for some time - but they had found out 'too late' to benefit from the service. So, if you have any such experiences in your caring role, why not share it with other carers. Let me know by contacting me deem@carersact.asn.au or write to me at: Carers ACT, 54 Benjamin Way, Belconnen ACT 2617.

In June we wrote to a number of Carers about our new 'opt out' model to membership of Carers ACT. Anyone who accesses our service automatically becomes a member (but only with the Carer consent) and remains a member until they advise us otherwise. Membership to Carers ACT is free of charge. We do ask for voluntary donations for families who are in a position

to do so - but this is by no means mandatory. Some Carers expressed concern about the use of donations or misunderstood that this is not mandatory. I hope the following addresses any concerns but I would encourage you to phone me directly if you wish to discuss this further.

Carers ACT is a not for profit, member based community association and receives its funding from the Australian and ACT Governments to provide services and supports for family Carers. Last year members donated \$30,000 in voluntary donations to the Association. We also received \$52,000 cash funding from sponsors such as G.E. Shaw to help pay for supports for Carers that are not allowable in the government funded programs. Many Carers find it difficult to make ends meet and we used member donations and sponsorship funds to pay for food and fuel vouchers, provide underprivileged families with short breaks at the south coast, massage vouchers, as well as subsidise the Young Carers Program which has been under-funded for

some time. Carers accessing services such as counselling often like to make a contribution. These contributions are reinvested in the programs directly so that the program can reach out and support other Carers. It should be noted, that if families are not in a position to make contributions or donations, they will never be denied services or support from Carers ACT.

The Association's Annual General Meeting will be held in our Belconnen Office on Thursday 27th November at 11am and the annual report for 2007-08 will be available together with minutes from the 2007 AGM. If you would like further information about the Agenda (there will be no extraordinary items this year), proxy voting or other information about the AGM please contact Lindy on 62969900. Please send your RSVPs to Lindy by 11th November. I hope to see you there and share our vision and goals for the coming year.

On behalf of the board and all the staff at Carers ACT, I wish you and yours all the best for a restful and excellent holiday break and look forward to talking with you soon.

Best regards,

Dee



A Long Goodbye

Mary was on reception at the hospital when I went for treatment. I liked her immediately and eventually she agreed to go out. We courted, became close and I asked her to marry me. She said "Speak to my father". I did. He grinned and said, "Ask her mother".

We married, honeymooned in the mountains, and settled in the city until I finished my studies. We were very happy and so much in love. We asked ourselves, do good times like this last forever?

Later she felt ill and consulted her doctor who told her she had mis-carried. I was dismayed – would we ever have a family? Cheerfully she replied "Of course, we will! Don't worry everything will be okay". And so it proved to be. We reared four healthy children and enjoyed the journey. As the children matured, she built a career and travelled within Aus-

tralia and overseas both professionally and socially. She led an active and rewarding lifestyle. We both looked forward to a satisfying retirement.

She drove to the medical centre for a routine visit. Her doctor, noticing she was disorientated, suggested further tests. Eventually she was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia.

Our lives were to change dramatically. She was gradually to lose her cherished independence – could no longer drive, required assistance with personal care and other activities at home and in public. Luckily she retained her cheer-

ful nature, wry sense of humour and full recognition of people and places.

Our younger daughter has come to live with us to help care for her mother. When she was a child

she would tell her mother "Mummy when you get old I'll look after you". Her kindness is so much appreciated.

Dementia has been described as 'a long goodbye'.

Tonight we will be close. We'll talk, recall past experience, sleep and dream.

Tomorrow we'll wake together to another beautiful day. We are so fortunate. We know now that good times do last forever.

By Ed Jones



I wish someone had told me...

I cared for my mother-in-law for four years before she passed away. During that time, I went

through a huge amount of emotional stress, and feelings of resentment.

I was offered counselling on so many occasions, I cannot count them, but I refused on every offer. At the time I thought, 'what

can a stranger do to help me and how could they possibly understand my situation?'

After my mother-in-law passed

away, my sorrow, and that of my husband, got all too much. I was once again offered some counsel-

ling and this time accepted, thinking 'I couldn't possibly feel worse, so I may as well give it a try'.

I cannot express in words how much difference the counselling made to me and my life after the passing of my mother-in-law. Just being

able to let all of my thoughts out, working through them one by one, finding solutions and new ways of viewing my issues was a very freeing experience. It also helped me

to deal with my husband's sorrow and gave me the tools to be more supportive of him and our children in that time of bereavement.

I only wish someone had alleviated my fears and cynicism about counselling sooner. I know it would have made a world of difference to me in my caring role, if only I had known this then.

I urge anyone who is thinking about counselling to try it, it really might help you.

By a Carer (anon)



Getting the Voices of Carers Heard

Policy Update

Appropriate supports make a real difference to Carers, helping them to provide care without risking their own health and wellbeing. Carers ACT has a mandate from its members to get the voices of Carers heard by government, and has been working hard with a number of policy projects to increase understanding and awareness of Carer needs. Recent activities in policy work have targeted both ACT and Federal Governments, promoting the need for development of long term, sustainable supports which make a real and measurable difference to families.

This work has been made possible by the wealth of new information generously contributed by the many Carers who participated in our recent surveys, interviews and focus groups. Carers ACT is committed to working with Carers to better understand and fairly represent evidenced need on an ongoing basis.

National Inquiry Into Better Support For Carers

In attempt to achieve better outcomes for Carers, the Carers Associations from around Australia have been attending and contributing to the state hearings for the Inquiry into Better Support for Carers by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Housing and Youth.

On Friday 26th December, Carers ACT CEO, Dee McGrath, and Policy Advisor, Annemarie Ashton, attended the ACT public hearing with three Carers, Carolyn Paisley-Dew (bereaved), Deborah Hayes and Judy Bentley.

Carers ACT would like to thank Carolyn, Deborah and Judy for their invaluable contribution.

ACT Legislative Assembly Election

The ACT Election campaign commenced with our 'Have Your Say' ACT Election Survey. Over 260 Carers responded, and we express our thanks to them once again for the wonderful response. Information gained through this survey was published in the 'Have Your Say' ACT Election Survey Report which can be found at <http://www.carersact.asn.au/publications.html> on the Carers ACT website.

Every candidate standing for election to the ACT Legislative Assembly was sent a summary of the findings of the survey. Carers ACT also contacted every political party to obtain a written policy response which was launched at the innovative Future for Carers – ACT Political Party Launch. This event offered sitting members and candidates the opportunity to listen instead of talking, as Carers from the ACT area presented powerful insights into need for appropriate support and services.

All Carers ACT members were sent a copy of the Special Election Edition of Carers ACT News on the Future for Carers. This publication detailed the policy responses of each party alongside information on key findings from the survey.

Throughout the election campaign, Dee McGrath and Annemarie Ashton kept conversations going with sitting members and new candidates, to provide additional information on identified needs

and keep 'Carer awareness' fully on the political agenda.

Media stories during the campaign were generated through coverage of our awareness raising activities. Carers ACT also provided media comment to television, newspapers and radio stations in the Territory as election promises were made and policies launched.

Stateline focus on Carers

ABC's Stateline program broadcast a wonderful story about the ACT Election Survey's insight into Carer needs on 15th August 2008 called Who Cares? Carers ACT is very grateful to Nicola Pepper for her participation in the Stateline story, which focused on the daily challenges she faces while caring for her son, Koben. Dee McGrath and Annemarie Ashton were also interviewed about the results of the survey and the need for political action on Carer concerns.



This program and a follow up story on the ageing population helped to get Carer issues firmly on the political and public agenda as an issue of community concern during the election. The transcripts and video files of these stories can be viewed at http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/act/transcript_archive.htm on the Stateline website.

Election Outcome

At the time of going to press, the outcome of the election for the ACT Legislative Assembly was yet to be finalised due to the need for either ACT Labor or the Canberra Liberals to form a minority government with the support of the ACT Greens. Carers ACT considers the election of a minority government to be an opportunity for increased debate and consultation across the community.

Top three election promises for Carers made by the ACT Greens included:

- assessing the need for further ACT legislative reform to strengthen the rights of carers, drawing on work done in other jurisdictions and examining the potential benefits of a Carers Charter
- increasing services that directly support carers, including: information and advisory services, counselling and emotional support, systemic and individual advocacy, training in life and

work skills

- addressing unmet needs for services in the areas of: early intervention, education, respite and holiday programs for children with a disability, accommodation support, respite, day programs and employment programs for adults with a disability, residential and community-based aged care services (including day programs and home help), residential and community-based services for health, mental health and problematic drug use

Top three election promises for Carers made by the Labor Party included:

- providing \$1.6 million over four years for Carers Advocacy Service and for a grandparents' support service
- commissioning a full review of administrative requirements for people caring for others
- introducing the ACT's first Charter of Rights for Carers

Top three election promises for

Carers made by the Liberal Party included:

- to meet all of the election promises for Carers made by ACT Labor
- \$5.8 million to increase the number of Individual Support Packages (ISP's)
- review the ACT Equipment Scheme, to devise a model designed to better meet the diverse needs of its clients

As an apolitical organisation, Carers ACT congratulates those candidates who were successful in obtaining a seat, and welcomes the opportunity to continue working with every member of the Legislative Assembly to provide sustainable and appropriate supports for all Carers in the Territory.

We would also like to thank all unelected candidates for their time and interest regarding Carer concerns, and trust that the knowledge gained about Carer issues will be useful in their future endeavours and evident in their ongoing commitment to community improvement.

CARERS ACT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

11 am Thursday, 20th November 2008
Carers ACT Belconnen Office, Ground Floor, Churches centre,
Benjamin Way, Belconnen.

Minutes of last meeting and the 2007-08 Annual Report
will be made available at this meeting.

Please RSVP to Lindy by Tuesday 11th November on 6296 9900 or
lindyw@carersact.asn.au. For more information please go to our website.

The Carer Advisory Service

A One Stop Problem Solving Shop - Freecall 1800 242 636

Attention all Carers – did you know this service existed??

If not, this is a service which can support you in your caring role, to assist the person you are caring for or if you need some information to help a friend or a relative who is in a caring role. If you are experiencing difficulties with getting the information you need, or if you are having a problem which is **not** within your capacity to resolve, this is the number for you to call.

The Carer Advisory call staff offer support through the hours of 9am through to 5pm Monday to Friday (and soon to be on Saturdays 9am -12noon, commencing 8th November 2008). In the event of calling

outside these hours, one of our staff will get back to you the next business day or within 24 hours.

All our staff have access to current information on all community care services, including Home and Community Care, Disability Support, respite services, counselling, education and training, a wide range of health services such as the Aged Care Assessment Team, and other social support as appropriate.

Our staff can also provide access to information in other states or territories by directing you to the Carelink Information line 1800 052 222.

In the event of a need for short term respite assistance, our staff can make a referral to the agency which best suits your needs. The Carer Advisory staff can also refer if there is a need to resolve an urgent issue and then follow up as required.

A good example of how this service can best be of assistance is when applying for a Centrelink Carer Allowance. The Carer Advisory Service staff can assist you with a few key steps which will make this process easier.

Please call today if you feel that we can assist you in your Caring role.

Steps and Tips for Carers when making application for a Carer Allowance

1. Advise Centrelink of your intent to claim by phoning 13 27 17 – the Centrelink staff will forward to you the correct and current forms.
2. By making this call to Centrelink, this will ensure that the payments are backdated to the date of initial contact upon the determination of eligibility from Centrelink staff..
3. Do make an appointment with the general practitioner and take the person you are caring for: ask the reception staff at the medical centre for an extended period for the appointment to allow for completion of forms
4. Ensure all areas of care are detailed and it can help if you make a list of all the areas of care you attend to, e.g. monitoring, prompting and supervision.
5. The particular areas which are important are checking safety around the home; preparation and prompting for medications; making all the appointments and the time that this takes.
6. Additionally, setting up the bathroom to ensure that all items are in readiness for personal care and that safety is ensured, is an example of monitoring and prompting.
7. If there are difficulties in communicating this information to the GP when in the company of the cared for person, deliver this information prior to the appointment – this will ensure that the GP knows how much you are doing in your Caring role. e.g. provide a documented letter or detailed list as you have made in Step 4. This will enable the cared for person to answer the GP's questions with some dignity and lessen the stress for you as the Carer.
8. To be eligible for the Carer Allowance, the hours of care must exceed 20 hours. This is a guide only as the areas of care must include monitoring, prompting and supervision of tasks relating to medication.
9. The Carer Advisory line 1800 242 636 can provide some assistance to the carer over the phone or in person to assist and in some instances will liaise with Centrelink Staff where appropriate.

Carers Calendar

Nov - Dec - Jan



Art Appreciation Group

10am Tuesday , 18 November
Meet outside the main entrance to the NGA for a FREE tour of Contemporary Australian art

10am Tuesday, 16 December
Meet outside the main entrance to the NGA for a FREE guided tour of the Degas exhibition

No meeting in January

RSVP essential, please call Jill on 6296 9913 or email jillp@carersact.asn.au

Craft Group

Members work on their own craft items, group projects and learn new craft skills in a friendly environment.

- **9.30am Thursday, 27th November**
- **No meeting in December**
- **9.30am Thursday 23rd January**

Carers ACT, Churches Centre, Benjamin Way, Belconnen

Please RSVP - contact Jill on 6296 9913 or jillp@carersact.asn.au.

Carers Singing Group

1.00pm - 2.30pm Monday's (except on public holidays or during the school holidays) at Carers ACT, Churches Centre, Benjamin Way, Belconnen.

For more information, call Lindy on 6296 9900 or lindyw@carersact.asn.au



Gardens Getaway for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Carers

Friday 12th December at the Crosbie Morrison Building, National Botanic Gardens.

RSVP by November 21st to your BCF or Emiliana on 62969915 or emilianaa@carersact.asn.au

National Museum of Australia (NMA Group)

Mitchell Stores "Behind the Scenes Tour"

Thursday November 20th
2:00pm – 3:30pm

Please meet at 1:50pm at 9-13 Vicars Street Mitchell for a behind the scenes tour of the NMA treasures. A unique opportunity to view items currently in storage and not usually seen by the general public.

Bookings are essential – please RSVP by Thursday 13th November. by calling Lindy on 6296 900 or lindyw@carersact.asn.au
Book early as numbers are limited to 20.



Summer Seasonal /Christmas Lunch

12:00pm – 2:00pm Thursday 18th December
Asian Café (Function Room)
32 West Row
Melbourne Building Civic

Bookings are essential – please RSVP by Thursday 11th December. by calling Lindy on 6296 900 or lindyw@carersact.asn.au
Book early as numbers are limited to 40.

Carers ACT Workshops

your wellbeing, understanding, coping skills

Yoga for vitality and inner peace - for family carers

This class will be an introduction to the benefits of yoga and relaxation. Please bring a mat and a blanket.

4.30pm - 6.00pm Tuesday evenings from 14th October - 9th December

Weston Creek Community Centre

For more information or to register contact 6296 9900 or jillp@carersact.asn.au

Cost: Free for family Carers

Keeping Families Connected

This five week program is for Carers of people with a mental illness and/or a substance dependence problem. The course provides information and explores issues connected with: Carer stress; mental illness; listening skills; assertively working with mental health professionals; suicide prevention; drug and alcohol use; and community support services.

6.45pm – 9.30pm Wednesday evenings from 5th November to 3rd December 2008

Carers ACT Belconnen, Churches Centre, Benjamin Way, Belconnen

Register by ringing 6296 9900 or email jillp@carersact.asn.au

Cost: Free for family Carers

Introduction to Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a meditative approach to life based on the understanding that “the present is the only time that any of us have to be alive, to know anything, to perceive, to learn, to

act, to change, to heal” (Kabat-Zinn,1990). This course will assist you to respond to situations in a fully present way.

WHEN: 6.30pm – 8.30pm for five Thursday evenings from 13th November to 11th December

WHERE: Carers ACT Belconnen, Churches Centre,

Benjamin Way, Belconnen

FACILITATOR: Sandi Plummer

CONTACT: 6296 9900 to register

COST: Free for family carers

Labyrinth Walk

Walking meditation and relaxation at Rachum, a beautiful bush property about three quarters of an hour from Canberra. Carers meet at Belconnen and catch a mini bus to Rachum together, lunch is provided. This is a day out for you to take care of yourself, take time to be in the present and, if you wish, reflect on any personal issues.

WHEN: 9.30am – 4pm
Wednesday 19th November

WHERE: Meet the bus at 9am at the Belconnen Markets

FACILITATOR: Alison Meretini

CONTACT: 6296 9900 to register

COST: \$5.00

Disability Discrimination

The most common ground for a discrimination

complaint is disability. This workshop will explore what the law says about disability, including the definition of disability, with reference to particular cases in a range of areas including employment, access to premises

and in the delivery of services. It will also look at the implications of exceptions to discrimination, which might apply to disability. Participants will consider strategies to enhance inclusion of people with disabilities in all areas of public life, and ensure equal opportunity.

WHEN: 10am to 1pm Tuesday
25th November

WHERE: Carers ACT Belconnen, Churches Centre,

Benjamin Way, Belconnen

FACILITATOR: Human Rights Commission

CONTACT: 6296 9900 to register

COST: Free for family carers

Centrelink payments for family Carers

Centrelink will be presenting information on eligibility and assessment criteria for Carer payments and tips on how to navigate the paperwork. Come and have your questions answered by Centrelink staff. Information on the social work service will also be presented.

WHEN: 1pm – 3pm Thursday,
27th November

WHERE: Carers ACT Belconnen, Churches Centre,

Benjamin Way, Belconnen

FACILITATOR: Centrelink Officer

CONTACT: 6296 9900 to register

COST: Free for family carers

Support Groups Diary

There are no support group meetings in January.

Northside Carers Support Group

10am - 12noon at Room 3,
Belconnen Community Centre,
Swanson Court, Belconnen.
Wed 5 Nov Open Discussion
Wed 3 Dec Christmas Lunch

Inner North Carers Support Group

10am - 11.30am at Function Room,
Majura Community Centre, Rosevear
Place, Dickson
Fri 21 Nov Open Discussion
Fri 12 Dec Christmas Lunch TBC

Southside Carers Support Group

10.30am - 12noon at Canberra Irish
Club, Weston Creek
Tues 4 Nov No meeting - holiday
Tues 2 Dec Christmas Lunch

Tuggeranong Support Group

1.30pm - 3pm at Tuggeranong
Community Centre, 245 Cowlshaw
St, Tuggeranong
Mon 10 Nov Open Discussion
Mon 8 Dec Open Discussion

Bereaved Carers Support Group

10.30am - 12noon
Wed 26 Nov Bicycle Museum,
Dickson
Wed 17 Dec Christmas Lunch,
Woden Tradesman's
Club (11.30am)
RSVP to Jill on 6296 9913.

Male Carers Support Group

11am - 12.30pm at the Lounge,
Canberra Southern Cross Yacht
Club, Lotus Bay, Yarralumla
Tue 18 Nov Open Discussion
Tue 16 Dec Open Discussion

Mature Carers Support Group

10.00am to 12.00pm at Torrens
Shops, Torrens Place.
Next meeting: Wed 3 Dec

Indigenous Carers Support Group

10am-2pm Boomanulla Oval,
Goyder Street, Narrabundah
every 3rd Thursday of the month.
Contact Roslyn 6296 9900

Arab Carers Support Group

10am - 12noon at Canberra Museum
and Gallery, Ground Floor, North
Building, London Circuit, Civic
Tue 11 Nov ACAT
Dec Gardens Getaway

Chinese Carers Support Group

10am - 12noon at Theo Notaras
Multicultural Centre, North Building,
London Circuit, Civic
Wed 5 Nov Palliative Care
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Croatian Carers Support Group

12pm - 2pm at the Training Room,
Carers ACT, Belconnen
Mon 10 Nov Diabetes
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Filipino Carers Support Group

1pm - 3pm at Canberra Museum
and Gallery, Ground Floor, North
Building, 180 London Circuit, Civic
Sat 1 Nov TBA
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Greek Carers Support Group

10am - 12noon at the Orpheus
Room, Hellenic Club, Woden
Thurs 13 Nov Diabetes
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Hungarian Carers Support Group

11am - 1pm at Polish Australian
White Eagle Club, Turner
Wed 26 Nov Footsure
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Indian Carers Support Group

12noon - 2pm at Canberra Museum
and Gallery, Ground Floor, North
Building, London Circuit, Civic
Sat 8 Nov TBA
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Italian Carers Support Group

10.30am - 12noon at the Italo-
Australian Club, Forrest
Fri 7 Nov Footsure
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Mon Carers Support Group

12noon - 2pm at Theo Notaras
Multicultural Centre, North Building,
London Circuit, Civic
Thurs 6 Nov Legal Aid
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Polish Carers Support Group

11am - 1pm at Polish Australian
White Eagle Club, Turner
Wed 26 Nov Footsure
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Samoan Carers Support Group

12noon - 2pm at Tongan Community
Centre, Copland Drive, Spence
Fri 28 Nov Legal Aid
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Spanish Carers Support Group

12pm - 2pm at the Training Room,
Carers ACT, Belconnen
Mon 10 Nov Diabetes
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Sudanese Carers Support Group

10am - 12noon at the Canberra
Museum and Gallery, Ground Floor,
North Building, London Circuit, Civic
Sat 22 Nov TBA
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Tamil Carers Support Group

11am - 1pm at Tamil Aged Care
Home, 11 Bromby St, Issacs
Sat 15 Nov Footsure
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Tongan Carers Support Group

12noon - 2pm at Tongan Community
Centre, Copland Drive, Spence
Fri 28 Nov Legal Aid
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Vietnamese Carers Support Group

10am - 12noon at Theo Notaras
Multicultural Centre, North Building,
London Circuit, Civic
Mon 3 Nov TBA
Fri 12 Dec Gardens Getaway

Employed Carers Meet and Greet/ Support Group

5.30pm for 5.45pm to 7.30pm on
Tuesday 18th November 2008
Topic: information and practical tips
around future planning for the best
outcomes for the cared for person
and Carer.

Contact Tonina on 6296 9900

New Mental Health Carers Representation Program

Are you already part of a group or on a committee as a Carer Representative? Would you like more support in your role as a Carer Representative? Or would you like to become a Carer Representative in the future? Are you interested in providing input to the development of Mental Health Carer policy or future research activities?

It is an exciting time for Carers ACT, with ACT Mental Health recognising the need for a true Carer perspective to be active in the development and improvement of Mental Health policy and service delivery. Carer representatives can, and should, play a vital role in representation and research conducted by Mental Health ACT, giving opportunity for valuable input and evaluation.



Funding has been received by Carers ACT to enable the development of a new Mental Health Carer Representation and Research Program. The aim of this new program is to establish and implement Mental Health Carer Representation by directly engaging with Carers to identify key issues of concern and look at collaborative solutions. The purpose is to encourage and assist with suitable training for Carers to represent themselves and others on various government com-

mittees, so as to lend valued support in developing agreed policy.

Carers ACT is launching the program by hosting a Mental Health Carer Representation Information and Discussion Forum for all Carers looking after someone with Mental Health issues who are interested in Carer Representation and Research activities. The lunchtime forum will take place from 12.30 pm to 2.30 pm on Tuesday 25th November at the Majura Hall Functions Room, Rosevear Place, Dickson. RSVP for attendance is essential. Please call Lindy on 6296 9900 to register. Please note that there is no charge for attending the forum.

Margaret Wooldridge will be the new Mental Health Representation and Research Program Coordinator. Margaret has been with Carers ACT since June 2007, as a coordinator in the Employed Carers Program, since relocating from Central West NSW. Margaret has a background in health service provision, as well as experience in the mental health sector and caring support. Margaret will work closely with the Policy Advisor at Carers ACT. If you have any queries on the new project, please contact Margaret on 6296 9900.

Carers Hospital Experience Research

The Mental Health Foundation aims to investigate the experience of mental health Carers, when the person they care for has contact with a mental health in-patient facility. The information will be collected confidentially and will be published in a report that will assist the government and the community mental health sector in advancing policy and service delivery for Carers.

If you are interested in taking part in this research or want to find out more about this project, please contact Denise Burton on 62307629 or email denise.burton@mhf.org.au

Draft ACT Mental Health Services Plan 2008 - 2013

This plan has been released for consultation for which your feedback is sought. This is an opportunity for Carers, consumers, and service providers to have their say. The plan gives a broad direction for the future development of public mental health services in the ACT. This plan has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders over the past two years and has been released to seek feedback from the broader ACT community.

The draft Mental health Services Plan is available for download from the ACT Health Website at www.health.act.gov.au. Hard copies are available by contacting the Health Services Planning Unit at ACT Health on 62071122 or 62052638. Your feedback can be returned via email to HealthPlanning@act.gov.au or by mail to:
Health Services Planning Unit
ACT Health, GPO Box 825 Canberra ACT 2601

Managing someone's medicines

An article from National Prescribing Service Ltd.

Managing a person's medications is usually part of the caring role. There are several things that can make this role easier.

Get to know your GP and pharmacist well

Good two-way communication with your GP and pharmacist is essential. The GP and pharmacist will need you to tell them about the health and well-being of the person you are caring for, any changes in their condition, and how they are responding to their medicines. In turn, you need the GP and pharmacist to give you clear information and instructions about the person's medicines and how to administer them. If you find it difficult to remember everything, you need to ask the GP or pharmacist for a clear explanation. Don't hesitate to ask the GP or pharmacist to write down any information or instructions you may forget.

If the GP or pharmacist is unwilling to share information about the person with you, make sure they understand that you are the person's carer, and that you are responsible for managing their medications.

If you feel uncomfortable saying some things in the presence of the person you are caring for, arrange an appointment without them.

Know their medicines

Understanding what medicines the person you are caring for needs and why they need them will help them get the best out of their medicines. Ask their GP to make a list of all the person's medicines, including any over-the-counter, herbal and natural medicines. Take the list with you when the person sees a doctor or pharmacist or

goes into hospital. The list should include the active ingredients and brand names of the medicines, what they are, side effects to look out for, how each medicine interacts with another, and how and when to take it.

Read the medicine label, and don't hesitate to ask questions. You can also ask the pharmacist for the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflet for each medicine. CMI leaflets contain comprehensive information about how the medicine works, how to take it, side effects and when to seek help. Keep the leaflets in a safe place, so you can refer to them later if necessary.

Consider asking the GP to organise a Home Medicines Review. This involves a specially trained pharmacist coming to your house to discuss the person's medicines with you and the person you are caring for. The pharmacist will explain what each of the medicines is for and anything else you need to know about them. They can also answer any questions you may have.

Keep track of their medicines

Keeping track of the medicines of the person you care for will help ensure that they get the right medicine at the right time and help prevent medicine-related problems. If the person takes several medicines, consider using a medication organiser. These are pill containers that store a day's or a week's supply of medicines in a series of small compartments.

Medication organisers make it easier for you to give the person each of their medicines at the right time. They also make it easy to see if a dose has been given already. This is particularly helpful if several

people are involved in giving the person their medicines.

If you are not using a medication organiser and more than one family member is involved in giving medicines, get each person to write down on a chart (eg in an exercise book) what medicine they gave, how much they gave, and when they gave it. If each carer checks the chart before giving any medicine, you will minimise the risk of missing doses or giving doses twice.

When you suspect that the person you are caring for is experiencing a side effect, it may help to keep a diary of their symptoms to give to your GP. This will help the GP determine whether the symptom is a side effect or a part of their health condition.

Look after yourself

Caring for another person is stressful and tiring. It is important that you look after yourself and your health, because you can't look after another person effectively if you are not in good health yourself.

Some suggestions that have helped other carers, include:

- try to continue doing at least some of the activities and outings you enjoy
- take respite breaks from caring from time to time
- try to get some regular exercise
- eat regular healthy meals
- get enough rest and sleep
- ask for help when you need it.

Carers Week 2008

On Carers Day, Tuesday 21st October 2008, some 200 Carers gathered at the Kingston Railway Station for their day trip on the historic steam train.

Before boarding the train, Carers were delighted by a warm address from Annette Ellis MP and some friendly words from Carers ACT CEO, Dee McGrath. Carers also enjoyed 3 songs from the Carers Choir, heard an inspirational poem written by a Carer, Sharon Jacobs (a poem which has been published in the new book "...because I care"), and listened to tunes played by the fiddle and accordion, all while enjoying a glass of juice and biscuits. WIN Local news covered the celebrations.

At 12noon, it was all aboard the steam train, bound for Bungendore, to enjoy a light lunch of Chicken Filo. As the train pulled away, the grins on the faces of all on board were shining through the windows.

At Bungendore, Carers were given a small goodie bag and could enjoy a leisurely stroll around the gardens at the Bungendore Station or take a trip into town to browse the stores.

Then, it was back on the train to enjoy a dessert of black forest cake and a cup of tea. Carers could join in some trivia or sit back and enjoy the countryside whizzing by.

The day provided some much deserved respite for all who attended.



"It was just a terrific day! The friendliness, the food, and meeting long time friends, please do it again!"

"I had a fabulous time and it was such a relaxing day!"

"It was a very interesting day and it helped me to recover from my stress."

Here are some of the comments we received:

"It was just a terrific day! The friendliness, the food, and meeting long



"Excellent meal and great company!"

"Excellent! Friendship, relaxation, and a rest from the day to day routine."

"Everything made me feel really special for the day!"

"It was perfect! The train and the people really made it a special day!"

"It was diversionary therapy for Carers!"

Carers Day is a na-

tional day for Carers and events are held all over the country to give Carers a special day. Carers Day 2008 in Canberra was a huge success.

Carers Week in Canberra has two main aims every year. The first is to celebrate Carers and the important role that they play, this includes special events run for Carers to enjoy. The second is to raise awareness of Carers in the community, to reach hidden Carers and to educate the wider community of the important role they play.

Awareness raising activities during Carers Week included an informative display in the Canberra Centre, our

TV ads on WIN television, the flower bed on Northbourne Avenue (London Circuit end) displayed the word 'Carers', and Carers ACT did a number of presentations to groups around Canberra to raise awareness of family Carers and the services available to support Carers.

We hope that our Carers Week activities have helped us to reach some hidden Carers so that we can provide services to more Carers in Canberra.

And we hope that you all had a very enjoyable Carers Week 2008!



Preparing For Emergencies

Part 2 of a continuing series

Find out about emergency plans

Research emergency prevention, preparedness and response plans and procedures;

- Your children's schools – find out if children will be kept at school or sent home on their own and how you can arrange for them to be picked up.
- Your workplace – check if your workplace has plans in place for emergency evacuations and find out what you are meant to do.
- Your apartment building – check if your apartment building has plans in place for emergency evacuations and who is responsible for those plans.
- Prepare your own home evacuation and emergency plan (ask your local emergency services for advice).
- Nursing home – ask at the nursing home administration office about any plans for when an emergency occurs.

Local governments have plans affecting your area. In the ACT the Emergency Services Agency (ESA) has information of particular relevance to Canberra - contact 02 6207 8451. In NSW there are several agencies with extra information, ie the Rural Fire Service (RFS) or the State Emergency Service (SES).

Prepare an emergency kit and keep it handy

Keep the items listed below in your home so they can become your emergency kit for use in all types of emergencies:

- battery-operated radio (with spare batteries)
- torch (with spare batteries), candles and water-proof matches
- first aid kit and manual, including personal protective equipment such as disposable gloves, face masks and goggles
- Medications (and repeat prescriptions), tissues, toiletry and sanitary supplies
- special needs for infants, the aged and people with disabilities
- spare clothes including strong shoes, broad brimmed hat, leather gloves and sunscreen for each household member
- sleeping equipment
- a mobile phone, spare battery and charger
- strong plastic bags (for clothing, valuables, documents and photographs)
- extra car and house keys

- copies of important family documents (birth certificates, passports and licences)
- contact details for your agreed out-of-town contact
- books, playing cards or games
- credit cards, key cards and cash
- a quantity of clean water in a sealed container and enough easily prepared packaged food to last for at least three days (rotate supplies to prevent spoilage).

While many emergencies will only extend over a few days, some will last longer. For example the Australian food sector recommends planning for a 14-day stay at home by building and rotating food items in your pantry. An example of an emergency pantry planning list is available on the Australian food sector's website www.pantrylist.com.au. Naturally all households differ and you should customise the list to suit your needs.

If you live in an area where there is a high risk of bushfires, floods, cyclones or other natural hazards, emergency management agencies will advise on specific contents for an emergency kit.

Emergency contacts

Remember to dial 000 for police, fire and ambulance attendance during life or property threatening situations. If you have a hearing or speech impairment, dial 106 through your textphone (TTY) to obtain emergency service attendance. When notifying the emergency services of your location, ensure that you provide the exact street address and the nearest cross roads.

The State Emergency Service contact is 13 25 00. Canberra Connect contact is 13 22 81.

Part 3 in our next newsletter will look at What to Do if an Emergency Occurs.

This information is an excerpt from the Preparing for the Unexpected booklet by Emergency Management Australia (EMA). The whole booklet is available online www.ema.gov.au or can be ordered by email from ema@ema.gov.au or by telephoning EMA on 02 6256 4600.

News from The Cottage

Ceilidh

On Saturday, 20th September 2008 the Cottage hosted a Scottish Ceilidh at St John's Church in Reid, in celebration of Dementia Week. Clients of the cottage and their family member enjoyed bagpipes, Scottish country dancing and a meal of Haggis, Neaps & Tatties, Soup and Damper, dessert and cheeses.

The Cottage would like to thank the Burns Club for their donation of the coaster for the coaster toss.

The cottage wishes it's clients a happy and safe Christmas.

Cottage walking Group

New evidence suggests that regular exercise of the body can protect against the development of Alzheimer's.

The Cottage Walking Team under direction of their team leader Bess, exercise regularly and can be seen out and about in Deakin.



The Cottage Olympics

During the Beijing Olympic Games, the clients at the cottage had their very own games, including Table Tennis, Floor Bowls and Velcro Darts. Many gold medals were won and fun was had by all. Below is the photo of our complete team, displaying their medals!!!



Young Carers (7- 10 year olds) group

This group meets monthly to have fun and share experiences. We meet at the Belconnen Carers ACT office. Our end of year get together will be at the National Gallery on Tuesday 2nd December, meeting at 4pm at the front door. There will be fun activities in the Gallery and then we will have a picnic by the Lake. Family members are invited to the picnic afterwards. The picnic will be provided by Carers ACT. Ring Nat on 6296 9938 if you would like your son or daughter to join the group. RSVP essential.

Young Carers 12- 15 girls group

Christmas Get together- The Friends for Life Group will finish its weekly sessions during Term 4, and our monthly group will start in December. Join us to finish up the year with Bowling on Wednesday 17th December, followed by Dinner. We will meet at AMF Bowling at Belconnen at 4pm. Ring Nat on 6296 9938 if you would like to come.

My Harry

By Joan Norris

Where have "you" gone?
That "you" that I loved.

Your body still walks but your mind
Travels in circles

You walk alone on a path.

To nowhere
From nowhere

Flashes of memory from our yesterdays
From long ago, bring a smile to your eyes.

I feel the pain as you silently cry
"Take away this fog – that clouds my brain."

Give me glimpse of life and love again.
Or give me the peace of death.

Family Leadership and You (FLY) Workshops

Sally Richards, the coordinator of FLY, is holding two family workshops to:

- Talk about the importance of relationships and how to form and keep relationships in a life
- Give a brief overview of Person Centred Planning, PATH, MAP, Circles of Support
- Talk about future planning and how you might start to do that
- Answer questions
- Make times to meet with individual families who want to do that

DATE: Wednesday 29th October

TIME: 12.30 PM to 2.30 PM

DATE: Tuesday 18th November

TIME: 10.00 AM to 12.00 PM

WHERE: Building 1, SHOUT, Collett Place, Pearce

RSVP: Sally on 62810974; sallyr1@iinet.net.au

headspace ACT

headspace ACT a youth mental health service opened in September. Set up as a one-stop shop, young people aged 12-25 and their families can receive early intervention with mental health and substance use issues. Seeking help can be quite daunting for some young people, and friends and family are not always equipped to know how to best deal with these issues.

Through headspace ACT young people can receive support from a range of professionals including psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, alcohol and other drug workers, youth workers and vocational support workers. Young people can self-refer or teachers, youth workers, GPs, family or carers can refer with consent from the young person.

open hours: Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 10am-5pm, closed Weds

phone: (02) 6201 5343

email: headspaceACT@canberra.edu.au

web: www.headspace.org.au/act

address: Building 12, Level B, Room 40
University of Canberra, Bruce

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. We are governed by a volunteer board of directors with caring and professional skills who set the strategic direction of the organisation and oversee financial and legal governance.

Our Vision:

Caring is accepted as a shared community responsibility

Our Mission:

Leading change and action with and for Carers

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
<http://www.carersact.asn.au>

Torrens Office:

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

Commonwealth Carelink & Carer Respite Centre 1800 052 222*

Carer Advisory Service 1800 242 636*

* An Australian Government Initiative.

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

Patron Mr R J Cahill, OAM,
Chief Magistrate

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of Carers ACT Inc. Articles in this newsletter may be reproduced with permission of the Editor (Colleen Donohoe).

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:

Friday 9 January 2008. Please send articles and items to carers@carersact.asn.au.

Would you or someone you know like to become a member of Carers ACT?

Membership is **FREE** and benefits include: Delivery of our quarterly Newsletter to your home, special invitations to Carers ACT events, and a buy-one-get-one-free arrangement for Carers at Hoyts Cinemas. By being a member of Carers ACT you also enable us to represent a stronger Carers voice to Government and the community. To become a member, simply fill out and return the **MEMBERSHIP FORM** below to: Carers ACT, Ground Floor, Churches Centre, Benjamin Way, Belconnen ACT 2617

Title First name Surname
Address Postcode
Phone Mobile Email
Gender: Male Female Date of Birth Country of Birth
Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? Yes No Are you a family Carer? Yes No

If you are a family Carer, please provide the details of the person you are caring for & answer other questions below:

Title First name Surname
Gender: Male Female Date of Birth Country of Birth
Condition of Care Recipient: Disability Chronic illness Frail aged Mental illness Other
Option: Specify Condition _____ Is he/she Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? Yes No
How long have you been caring?
What is your relationship to your cared for person?

By signing this form you are agreeing to allow us to store your information in our confidential database, provide this information (without your name and address) to our funding bodies for statistical and planning purposes, and send you relevant information, including a copy our quarterly Newsletter (4 per year) and invitations to workshops and special member events. Signed: _____ Date: ___/___/_____

DONATIONS GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED I wish to donate: \$10 \$20 \$50 Other _____

I have enclosed a cheque/money order for my donation payable to "Carers ACT" OR

Please charge to my credit card (min \$10): Bankcard Visa MasterCard Other _____

Card number: _____ Expiry: ___/___

Name on Credit Card: _____ Signed: _____ Date ___/___/_____

IF UNDELIVERED PLEASE RETURN TO:

Carers ACT Inc.

Ground Floor, Churches Centre,

Benjamin Way, BELCONNEN ACT 2617

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