

Media Release

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Role of carers formally recognised in legislation

Australia's carers have been formally recognised for their contribution to society with the passing of the Carer Recognition Bill through Parliament today.

The new legislation recognises the valuable social and economic contribution, as well as the many personal sacrifices, made by hundreds of thousands of carers across the country.

The legislation establishes a definition of a carer, and includes a Statement for Australia's Carers that sets out key principles on how carers should be treated and considered by Australian Government agencies and the providers they fund.

It recognises in legislation the contribution by the mums and dads, the grandparents, the sons and daughters, the brothers and sisters, partners and neighbours who every day get on with the job of caring.

We are determined to give carers the acknowledgement they have asked for, and which they so clearly deserve.

It will drive much-needed cultural and attitudinal change about the demands and responsibilities of caring and the physical, emotional and financial toll this can have on the community.

Australian Government agencies are now required to consider the Statement when developing human resource policies that significantly affect their employees' caring roles.

Agencies with policies and programs directed to carers or the people they care for now also need to consult with carers and report annually on action undertaken.

As well, organisations funded by the Australian Government to support carers, or the people they care for, need to adopt the Statement's principles in their interaction with carers.

The legislation is an important step towards improving support for carers. The Government is also working with states and territories to develop the National Carer Strategy, which will shape the long-term agenda for reform and guide policy development and the delivery of services for carers.

The legislation and the National Carer Strategy is central to the Government's response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family,

Community, Housing and Youth report *Who Cares? Report on the inquiry into better support for carers.*

The legislation builds on the Government's practical measures to improve the lives of carers through significant reforms across the disability, health, mental health and aged care service systems.

These include:

- In September 2009, delivering a \$60 a fortnight increase to the base pension plus an increase of \$5 a fortnight in the new Pension Supplement for carers receiving the maximum single rate of Carer Payment. With the indexation increases from March 2010 and September 2010, the increase now totals \$115 a fortnight.
- Guaranteeing the certainty of an annual ongoing Carers Supplement of \$600 for each person cared for, benefitting around 500,000 carers.
- Overhauling the complex and restrictive eligibility requirements for Carer Payment (Child).
- Doubling the funding to state and territory governments for specialist disability services including supported accommodation, in-home care and respite.
- Requesting the Productivity Commission to examine the feasibility, costs and benefits of a long-term disability care and support scheme.

This legislation delivers on the Government's commitment to provide better support for carers so they have the same opportunities as other Australians to live healthy, happy lives and reach their full potential.

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