

# Media Release



19 February 2012

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing Australia's 2.6 million carers. Our vision is that 'caring is accepted as a shared community responsibility' and our mission is 'to lead change and action with and for carers'.

## Carers' voices must be heard on mental health reform

Family members and friends are the major source of care and support for Australians with a mental illness. Mental health carers are a critical part of the care team and have a unique and deep understanding of the needs and concerns of people with a mental illness. Caring for a person with a mental illness can be tough and take its toll both physically and emotionally. At the release of the national policy position statement, *Carers and Mental Health Reform*, Carers Australia President, Mr Tim Moore, said that "it is critical that mental health carers are listened to by service providers and policy makers if we are to better meet the needs of people with a mental illness and the families and friends who support them".

*Carers and Mental Health Reform* has been developed by Carers Australia and the eight state and territory Carers Associations and it is grounded in the views and experience of mental health carers.

Mr Moore said that "the statement has been released at a time of heightened community and government appreciation of the need for mental health reform, as indicated by the development of the Ten Year Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform and the establishment of the National Mental Health Commission. The recently released 4<sup>th</sup> draft of the Ten Year Roadmap provides a good start to reforming the mental health sector, but it needs to include bold initiatives and clear targets. These should include targets for improving the situation of mental health carers such as increased carer support services, improvements in health and well-being, greater participation in the workforce and acceptance of carers by service providers as partners in care".

*Carers and Mental Health Reform* also considers developments outside the mental health sector which have the potential to improve mental health outcomes. These include the expected introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme, which Mr Moore said must include people with significant and enduring psychiatric disabilities and their carers, and the further development and implementation of the National Carer Strategy.

Mr Moore said that "the statement identifies other areas of policy that need urgent attention. In particular the lack of affordable and stable housing with appropriate support is a significant barrier to recovery of people with a mental illness and a source of great stress to their carers".

A copy of the National Policy Statement can be found [here](#).

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