

Anyone Anytime can be a carer

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Message from the Minister



Welcome to the October 2011 issue of *News for Carers*.

This month is a special time for carers—from 16–22 October Australians will celebrate Carers Week, which is an opportunity for us all to recognise, support and thank the carers in our community. Carers keep their families together, help people

remain in their communities, provide love and care in the last stages of life and nurture children with disability to help them get ready for the challenges of school. It's a tough and demanding role, and carers rarely plan to be a carer—anyone, at any time, really can be a carer.

Many carers don't see themselves as carers, and miss out on getting the support, information and financial assistance they may be entitled to. As a carer, you understand and can help others adjust to the caring role.

If you know of someone who you think may be a carer—talk to them about it. They may be a neighbour, friend or relative. They may have brought their grandparent to live with them, help a friend or family member everyday with showering, dressing or feeding or supporting someone recovering from an accident or surgery.

You can ask them if they have seen *News for Carers*—they may not know about some of the programs and services that we talk about in each issue. You could tell them about local services that you have used, or even create a support circle where you can share tips and experiences. At the very least, you will be letting them know that you appreciate them and their efforts.

On that note, I would like to thank all of you for the support you provide your families and the value you add to our community. I hope that you find this issue of *News for Carers* interesting and helpful. I look forward to sharing more news and information in our next issue.

Yours faithfully,

Tanya Plibersek MP

Minister for Human Services

Minister for Social Inclusion

Carers Week—16–22 October: Carers associations around Australia will run activities with other local support groups and organisations. To find out what is happening near you, call **1800 242 636**.

Australia has a National Carer Strategy!

Many people do not realise the enormous contribution carers make to Australian society.

The National Carer Strategy is a long-term commitment to carers. It seeks for society to value and respect carers and ensure they have the rights, opportunities and capabilities to participate in economic, social and community life.

In the short term, the National Carer Strategy includes new funding to support carers. This includes improved

access to financial support, continuing support for carers to engage in paid work and an awareness campaign to encourage those who do not see themselves as carers to access services and support.

You can go to **www.centrelink.gov.au** to find out how the National Carer Strategy affects carer entitlements.

For more information about the National Carer Strategy, or to download a copy, go to **www.fahcsia.gov.au**



Moving to a clean energy future

Carers and the people they care for will be supported as Australia moves towards a clean energy future.

The Australian Government's Clean Energy Future plan will introduce a carbon price to cut pollution in the cheapest and most effective way and drive investment in clean energy sources such as solar, gas and wind.

A carbon price is not a tax on households—around 500 of the biggest polluters in Australia will be required to pay for their pollution under the carbon pricing mechanism, and every dollar raised will be used to support households, jobs and to invest in clean energy and climate change programs.

To assist households with price impacts, there will be tax cuts and increases in pensions, allowances and benefits. Tax reform will also mean that over one million individuals will no longer need to file a tax return.

Carers and people with disability will receive assistance through their Carer Payment or Disability Support Pension (DSP), tax cuts, or both.

DSP and Carer Payment recipients will be eligible for household assistance that at least offsets the expected average price impact under a carbon price.

Payments will increase by an amount equal to 1.7 per cent of the maximum rate. This will be an increase of up to \$338 for singles and \$255 for each member of a couple.

In addition, many people with disability and carers who have taxable incomes under \$80 000 will benefit from tax cuts of up to \$300.

Assistance will be automatic and will start before the carbon price is introduced, with an advance payment in May–June 2012. This will provide assistance to cover the first nine months of the carbon price. Fortnightly payments will start from March 2013 and will be paid in line with people's normal pension payment cycles.

People holding a Commonwealth concession card who have high home energy costs because they rely on essential medical equipment will also be able to claim the Essential Medical Equipment Payment of \$140 through Centrelink. This is in addition to their other assistance and will cover the expected change in running costs, such as home dialysis machines for kidney disease and ventilators for motor neurone disease.

For more information you can call **1800 057 590** or go to **www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au**

Need help and support in your local area?

You may like to consider the support services offered across Australia:

- the Carer Advisory Service, which provides emotional support, advice, information and referrals to carers, **and**
- the National Carer Counselling Program, which provides short-term counselling from qualified counsellors on issues that are specific to carer's needs.

Both services are run locally by state and territory carers associations which work closely with Carers Australia.

They also represent your needs and interests in your state or territory and community and can refer you to local support groups, free information and resources on a range of topics to support you in your caring role.

To be connected to the Carer Advisory Service, the National Carer Counselling Program, or to get other information to help you in your caring role, call the carers association in your state or territory on **1800 242 636**.



What is the Better Start for Children with a Disability initiative?

Under the Better Start initiative, support will be provided to children with moderate or greater sight or hearing impairment, deaf blindness, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy or Fragile X syndrome.

Eligible children aged under six years can be registered to access early intervention financial assistance of up to \$12 000 (to a maximum of \$6000 per financial year).

Financial assistance will be available for services and therapies such as speech pathology, audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychology and orthoptics.

You have until your child turns seven to access this financial assistance.

A number of new Medicare items are also part of the Better Start initiative. The new items are available for children up to the age of 15, provided their treatment and management plan is in place before the age of 13. You should talk to your child's doctor about these Medicare items.

The Better Start Registration and Information Service is operated by Carers Australia. For information about how to register your child for the Better Start initiative, call Carers Australia on **1800 242 636** or go to **www.fahcsia.gov.au/betterstart**

What is Carer Allowance?

Carer Allowance is a supplementary payment of up to \$110.00 per fortnight. This payment may be available to you if you are a parent or carer who provides daily care and attention for an adult or child with a physical, intellectual or psychiatric disability or someone who is frail aged.

Support for young people with disability and their families

Reading about other people's experiences and sharing your own story can be a great source of strength for many caring families.

Family Voices is the membership magazine for the Children with Disability Australia (CDA), a not-for-profit national organisation representing children and young people with disability aged 0–25 years and their families. The national publication includes a mix of stories, information and advocacy news.

A CDA membership is free for families and young people with disability. Every new member adds strength to the efforts of CDA to advocate for improvements to services and supports for children and young people with disability.

If you are considering sending your story to *Family Voices*, your contribution will be truly appreciated.

For more information, or to share your story, go to **www.cda.org.au** or call **(03) 9482 1130** or **1800 222 660** (interstate or regional callers).

Why join a carers association?

Membership is free for individual carers and can provide a range of supports and information, including access to a quarterly newsletter with relevant and timely information about services and events to support you in your caring role and representation of your issues at both a local and national level. You can also get access to discounts such as movie tickets, invitations to special members-only events, and free use of the association library service and internet facilities.

Carers associations are in every state and territory and work with Carers Australia.

For more information, or to download a membership form, go to **www.carersaustralia.com.au** and select your state or territory, or call **1800 242 636**.

Could a day therapy centre help the person you care for?

The Day Therapy Centre Program provides a wide range of therapy services to frail older people living in the community and residents of Commonwealth funded aged care homes who receive low-level care.

Therapy services include physiotherapy, occupational therapy, podiatry and speech therapy. They are offered to individuals to help them maintain or recover a level of independence that will allow them to remain in the community.

You can get a referral for the person you care for in several ways, such as from a General Practitioner, social worker, geriatrician, community health worker, Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT), hospitals, self-referral and by a carer or family member.

There are 139 day therapy centres operating nationally, with most located in or near aged care homes. For more information call the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre on **1800 200 422** or go to the Department of Health and Ageing website at www.health.gov.au/ageing

What is Carer Payment?

Carer Payment can provide you with income support if, because of the demands of your caring role, you are unable to support yourself through substantial paid employment.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

On 10 August 2011, the Prime Minister released the Productivity Commission's final report into care and support for people with disability.

The Australian Government asked the Productivity Commission to examine reform of disability support services because the system we have today is not delivering the kind of care and support Australians expect for people with disability.

The Productivity Commission has recommended a National Disability Insurance Scheme that will entitle all Australians to support in the event of significant disability. They recommend that work start right away, with the launch of a scheme in selected sites around the country in mid-2014, and a National Disability Insurance Scheme fully operating around the country by 2018-19.

The Australian Government shares the vision of the Productivity Commission for a system that provides people with disability with the care and support they need over the course of their lifetime. The Productivity Commission makes clear in its report that there is a lot of work ahead to get the system ready for a trial of a scheme in 2014. The Australian Government has now started the fundamental work to reform disability services.

For a copy of the Productivity Commission's report call **1300 889 873**.

If you want to get updates on the reform progress, you can register at www.fahcsia.gov.au/ndis

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is intended only as a guide. The information is accurate as at October 2011. If you use this publication after that date, please check with Centrelink that the details are current.



Increased eligibility for Carer Allowance (Child)

As part of the National Carer Strategy, the Australian Government has extended automatic eligibility for Carer Allowance (child) to families and carers of children with Type 1 Diabetes aged up to the age of 16.

From September 2011, carers of children with Type 1 Diabetes aged more than 10 years who have a Carer Allowance Health Care Card for their child will have automatically received payment of the \$110 per fortnight Carer Allowance (child).

Previously, automatic eligibility for Carer Allowance (child) cut out when children with Type 1 Diabetes turned 10 years old. This rule was introduced in 2006 and Type 1 Diabetes is the only condition for which there was a cut-off age of 10.

This change recognises that Type 1 Diabetes is a life long condition for which there is currently no cure and provides parents and carers with recognition and financial support for the care they provide.

For more information or to make a claim call **13 2717** or go to **www.centrelink.gov.au**

Useful Centrelink numbers

Carers and Disability Services **13 2717**

Social Work Services **13 1794**

To speak to Centrelink in a language other than English **13 1202**

Indigenous Call Centre **13 6380**

Customer relations **Freecall™ 1800 050 004**

Suggestions, complaints and compliments

Financial Information Service **13 2300**

Go to our website at **www.centrelink.gov.au**

Important: calls from your home phone to Centrelink '13' numbers from anywhere in Australia are charged at a fixed rate. That rate may vary from the price of a local call and may also vary between telephone service providers. Calls to '1800' numbers from your home phone are free. Calls from public and mobile phones may be timed and charged at a higher rate.

Need help around the house?

The Home and Community Care (HACC) Program delivers high quality, affordable and accessible services in the community that are essential to the well being of eligible older Australians, younger people with a disability, and their carers.

The HACC Program can provide services to eligible people such as domestic assistance, personal care, access to professional allied health care, nursing services, home modifications and transport.

The HACC Program delivers these services in order to support people to be more independent at home and in the community.

Carers may be eligible to receive respite care, counselling, support, information and advocacy through the HACC Program.

For further information about the HACC Program call **1800 200 422**. This number links to a wide range of community aged care and support services that are available nationally and in your local region.

Additional information can be found on the Department of Health and Ageing website at **www.agedcareaustralia.gov.au**

