

MEDIA RELEASE



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Let's be clear on the value of carers

The Disability Royal Commission has released an [overview of responses to the violence and abuse of people with disability issues paper](#) which highlighted cases in which 'carers' were perpetrators of abuse.

Acting CEO Melanie Cantwell said, "Every day, over 2.65 million unpaid family and friend carers provide care and support to people living with disability, chronic or life-limiting illness, those who are frail aged or have a mental illness, alcohol or other drug related condition. The vast majority of carers provide this care and support with empathy, love, and respect."

"The term 'carer' should not be confused with 'abuser' or used broadly and without context to describe a paid care worker, foster carer or a family member or friend who is not, in fact, a carer as defined by the *Carer Recognition Act 2010 (Commonwealth)*. There are different issues and solutions for paid care workers and unpaid carers, and the Royal Commission needs to recognise this."

"Under no circumstance is abuse or neglect ever acceptable. But this is the case for both people living with a disability and for their family and friend carers. Stronger community supports and services that strengthen the relationships between carers and the people they care for must be a priority this coming [budget](#) and [federal election](#)."

"Services like respite. Services like individual advocacy – for the carer and the person living with disability. Services like better financial and economic supports. These are what make a difference to the pressures experienced by carers and support better choice and control by people living with disability."

"The lack of recognition of the caring role and its impact, not being identified by services they interact with, and not getting access to appropriate and timely respite care and support need to be called out as critical structural factors that are not getting addressed to minimise situations of potential abuse towards someone with a disability by a family or friend carer."

"Many factors contribute to carer stress and poor mental health which are two risk factors for potential abuse. These include the frequency and intensity of care; financial hardship or poverty; behavioural challenges manifested by the person being cared for; a lack of formal and informal support; and insufficient breaks from the caring role – all of which have been exacerbated by COVID-19 for more than two years."

"Carers can be critical reporters and preventers of abuse. As important allies in identifying abuse in the home, family and friend carers require safe and confidential avenues to raise concerns or complaints



with regards to potential abuse and neglect, as well as safeguards that ensure there are no repercussions for reporting, particularly for the person they care for.”

“Ultimately, we want the Commission to more carefully use the term ‘carer’, make distinctions between the paid care workforce and unpaid family and friend carers, improve recognition of the relationship between carers and the person they care for, and focus on protective activities in the recommendations to support carers to maintain and thrive in their caring role. When the pandemic is over, many carers’ lives will not change – they will continue to be isolated, financially disadvantaged, and unrecognised.”

About Carers Australia and the National Carer Network

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing Australia’s carers, advocating to influence policies and services at a national level. The National Carer Network, which consists of Carers NSW, Carers ACT, Carers Victoria, Carers Tasmania, Carers SA, Carers WA, Carers NT, and Carers Queensland, deliver a range of essential carer services across states and territories.

About carers

An informal, unpaid carer is a family member or friend that cares for someone who has a disability, chronic or life-limiting illness, is frail aged, has a mental illness, alcohol or other drug related condition. Informal carers are distinct from paid support workers who are colloquially also called carers but are fully employed and remunerated with all the benefits of employment. Conversely, family and friend carers perform their caring duties without remuneration.

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