



**Margaret May MP**

---

**Federal Member for McPherson  
Shadow Minister for Ageing**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

---

**12 March 2008**

**MM0/03/008**

# **CARERS – CARING FOR THE NATION Labor’s social “EXCLUSION” policy**

Shadow Minister for Ageing Margaret May has welcomed the announcement that the carers’ and seniors’ bonus will be paid as lump sum payments.

Margaret said: “Now that speculation has ended, older Australians and carers can move on.

“The anxiety caused by the Rudd’s Government handling of this matter hasn’t been helpful by any stretch of the imagination.

“The Rudd Government “style” appears to be one of negative talk and generating panic and anxiety in the community.

“What was particularly offensive was the way that Labor speakers on yesterday’s Matter of Public Importance kept talking like automatons on WorkChoices rather than carers and pensioners.

“The Minister for Ageing (the Hon Justine Elliot MP) did not even participate in the Matter of Public Importance debate and has not made any public comment supporting carers and elderly Australians.

“This is disgraceful considering that carers and elderly Australians are her areas of responsibility.

“The Rudd Government and the Minister for Ageing didn’t acknowledge or recognise the importance of these bonuses and the choice they give to recipients about where they spend their dollars.

“So much for Labor’s social inclusion policy, this was all about social exclusion.

“I want to stress the work carers undertake forms the glue of Australian society.

“Over the past decade, two major policy shifts have occurred.

“There are shorter hospital stays and an overall shift from institutional care to community care. As a consequence, family members are being increasingly called upon to care for other family members at home.

**“The availability of carers and their ability to continue their caring role is critical to the sustainability of the current Australian health and community care systems.**

“Caring takes its toll. Family carers have poorer health and wellbeing than non carers.

“Caring can last for a long time with Australian Bureau of Statistic data showing that 60% of primary carers over the age of 15 have cared for someone for five or more years and a third have cared for someone for 10 or more years.

“Carers as a population group generally have lower incomes and lower standards of living than other population groups.

“They are therefore at risk of poorer health and wellbeing.

“A national survey of carer health found that over half of all carers suffered a decline in physical health with one-third of all carers had been physically injured in the time they had been providing care.

“Two-thirds of carers felt their mental and emotional health had been affected by providing care.

“Constant pressure of caring, stress, disturbed or lost sleep and providing mobility such as lifting and transferring were the most common reasons reported for affecting health.

“Carers neglect their own health by delaying visits to the doctor, hospital treatment operations because of their caring duties.

“I would ask every single Australian to consider what Australia would be like without carers.

“We would be paying bucket loads of extra tax, our hospitals and aged care facilities would be under even more pressure and there would be many more social challenges to be met.

“The Rudd’s Government attitude to carers has undermined and taken carers for granted in a damaging way and the episode has left Australia all the more poorer because of it.

“If the last few days is a demonstration of Labor’s social inclusion policy in action, then Australians indeed are unfortunate.

“The Australia of tomorrow will bear little resemblance to the caring and harmonious Australia of yesterday.

“What are the motivations of a Government that messes around with the most giving in Australian society”, Margaret said.

ENDS

Media Contact: Krystyna Homik - 07 5525 0688 or 0408 739 273