

# Media Release



13 May 2008

Carers Australia is the recognised national voice of Australian carers. Our members are the carers associations in each state and territory. We have no political affiliation. We work with all parties to achieve better outcomes for all carers. We believe that all carers are entitled to the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians.

## Gaping holes exposed in carer support

In a sobering lead-in to the Federal Budget, last night's Four Corners program has highlighted numerous deficiencies in the current support system for carers.

The program showed how buck-passing between various levels of government departments and inflexible service delivery has a debilitating effect on carers and their families who are often caught in the middle.

Carers Australia CEO, Joan Hughes says the problems discussed were only the tip of an ever-growing iceberg and tonight's budget will be a test of the sincerity of the new government.

"Sadly what we saw last night is not uncommon" Ms Hughes said. "More and more we are hearing similar stories of carers who are exhausted from battling with bureaucracy and who are struggling to cope."

"Tonight the new government has a chance to establish its credentials in carer support. Carers and their families will be watching closely."

Carers Australia has been at the forefront of bringing carer issues to the attention of the public. One area of great concern is that growth in carer support is not keeping pace with the demand. The pressure is being felt by those at the coalface with studies showing carers experiencing exceptional levels of stress and depression and the lowest wellbeing of any large group surveyed.

Last week the Prime Minister announced \$100 million in new funding to build supported accommodation for up to 210 people. However, a report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare says the unmet need in this area in 2005 was 23,800. By 2010, it is projected to reach 34,600 people.

"If there is nothing more to offer than a series of short-term fixes - we will continue to fall behind where we need to be" Ms Hughes said. "The Prime Minister likes to talk about supporting working families. Well carers do work – they just aren't paid for it. Where is the vision for them? We need a national carer action plan now."

"The overwhelming public backlash to rumours about proposed cuts to the Carers Bonus should have sent a clear message to the government."

"Carers have spoken. The public has indicated its support. It is time for the government to respond."

Carers Australia's 2008-2009 Federal Budget Submission is available at [www.carersaustralia.com.au](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au)

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