



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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FUNDING FOR CARER RESPITE EXTENDED

Federal Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, today provided certainty to community-based respite and carer support services by announcing the extension of 555 funding agreements for an additional three years.

“The agreements come under the National Respite for Carers Program (NRCP) and the affiliated Commonwealth Carelink Program (CCP) and were due to expire on 30 June 2008,” Mrs Elliot said.

Over \$420.33 million, plus indexation in the order of \$18 million, will be provided to respite and carer support services over the next three years through these extended funding agreements,” Mrs Elliot said.

“Extending these agreements for a further three years provides community-based respite and carer support services with the certainty they require to plan and manage their operations and continue to deliver high quality respite care for the carers of frail older Australians.

“Access to timely respite care and other carer support is crucial to sustaining carers in their role. The Government estimates that the NRCP and CCP programs alone provide respite care, counselling, carer information and support services as well as carer planning to nearly 130,000 carers per year.

“The Rudd Government understands how greatly the community values the respite and other carer support services delivered under the two programs. I’m therefore particularly pleased to announce these funding extensions.”

Mrs Elliot said the Government is committed to improving the operation of the community care sector, including through streamlining respite services to create a more sensible system for carers.

The funding extensions will reflect this.

“In addition, we will be extending the requirement for providers to undertake police checks for all staff, as well as volunteers with unsupervised access to care recipients as part of the extension of funding agreements.”

Mrs Elliot said the Rudd Government recognises that carers are among our nation’s greatest assets and programs such as the NRCP and the CCP help support carers in what is an often challenging and difficult role.”

The NRCP and the CCP are part of a range of government-funded programs designed to support older Australians and their carers.

The NRCP supports carers by funding respite, information provision and other support for carers. It funds more than 600 community-based respite services, as well as 54 Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres located around Australia, which are able to assist carers locate and obtain respite services in their local area.

NRCP funded respite is delivered in a wide range of settings, including day centres, overnight cottages and in carers' own homes.

In addition to funding community-based respite, the government also provides funding to approved residential aged care homes to deliver residential respite to the carers of older people. Funding for residential respite in 2007-08 is estimated to total \$122 million.

"Officers from the Department of Health and Ageing will be contacting services with expiring agreements over the coming days to provide more information about the extensions process," Mrs Elliot said

"Services delivering pilot project such as the Employed Carer Innovative Pilots (ECIPs) projects, will also be contacted shortly by the department with information about longer-term arrangements.

"These funding extensions provide respite services with funding certainty while the government considers, in consultation, possible improvements to the system," Mrs Elliot said.

More information: Carers wishing to find out more about services offered under the NRCP should contact their local Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre on 1800 059 059.

The Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres act as a single point of contact for older and disabled Australians and their carers, to assist with information about community care and other services available locally, such as respite, home help, transport, counselling and residential aged care services.

Facts

A Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2003 showed there were 2.6 million carers who provided some assistance to those who needed help because of disability or age.

About one fifth of these (19 per cent) were primary carers, that is people who provided the majority of the informal help needed by a person with a disability.

Just over half (54 per cent) of all carers were women. Women were also more likely (71 per cent) to be primary carers. Of those providing care, 1.0 million (39 per cent) were in the 35-54 year age range.

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