



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Extra funding for carer support services

The Rudd Government is providing certainty and extra funding for carer organisations through \$6.9 million in national one-off grants for community-based respite and carer support services.

Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot said the one-off grants will be distributed through the *National Respite for Carers Program* and *Commonwealth Carelink Program*.

It is estimated that nearly 130,000 carers use the *National Respite for Carers Program* and *Commonwealth Carelink Programs* a year - accessing respite care, counselling, carer information and support services and planning.

Mrs Elliot today announced the extra one-off \$6.9 million grants at the *West Morton/South Coast Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre* in Ipswich.

The \$6.9 million is in addition to the announcement two weeks ago that will see \$420 million, plus indexation of about \$18 million - provided to respite and carer support services over the next three years.

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

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 million (39 per cent) were in the 35-54 year age range.

Mrs Elliot said: "The additional funds will deliver much needed respite in a wide range of settings, including day centres, overnight cottages and in carers' own homes.

"The extra funding will also provide essential one-off expenses such as the purchase or replacement of equipment.

"And will help improve client safety and comfort - through building modifications, the provision of wheelchairs and a range of other service improvements," Mrs Elliot said.

"The Federal Government is committed to building a modern Australia, capable of tackling the challenges of the 21st century," she said.

"Access to timely respite care and other assistance is crucial to sustaining carers.

"The one-off funding will provide additional support for carers in the valuable work they do," Mrs Elliot said.

Further information

Carers wishing to find out more about services offered should contact their local Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre on 1800 059 059.

Carer Support Programs - The *National Respite for Carers Program* and *Commonwealth Carelink Program*. These programs are part of a range of government-funded programs designed to support older Australians and their carers.

They fund more than 600 community-based respite services, as well as 54 Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres which are able to help carers to locate and obtain respite services in their local area.

Ageing in Australia - Australia's population is getting older. Around 13 per cent of our population (some 2.8 million people) is aged 65 years or older. This is expected to rise to 18 per cent by 2021 and to 26 per cent (around 7 million people) in 2051. The number of people aged over 80 years will almost double over the next 20 years.

Australia is experiencing a new demographic phenomenon with citizens now enjoying the fourth longest life expectancy in the world – and a major shift in the number of people living to be more than 100. Currently, there are 2,860 Australians over the age of 100 and that is expected to explode to 78,000 by 2055.

For more information, contact Mrs Elliot's office on (02) 6277 7280