

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SUPPORTING CANBERRA'S CARERS

Canberra's 48,000 family and friend carers will benefit from today's announcement by Minister for Social Services, the Hon Dan Tehan MP, of a new \$85.6 million integrated national approach to delivering carer support services.

"We're very excited by this announcement," said Lisa Kelly, CEO of Carers ACT. "This new model will introduce a range of new tailored services to help carers get the support they need early before they reach crisis point. Carers ACT has been trialling this model with great success so it's wonderful to hear that it will now be implemented nationally.

"Most of us have little understanding of what a carer's life is really like and how critical support is to them. While there are certainly rewards to caring, most carers also face challenges in balancing family, work, caring and their own needs and this can lead to financial hardship, social isolation, health and wellbeing issues, frustration, exhaustion and extreme stress.

"Over one third of Canberra's carers are the main source of support to one or more people with disability, chronic or terminal illness, mental health issues or who are frail aged. These carers provide 40 hours or more of care a week and a third of them are living with disability themselves.

"Getting practical and emotional support early can have a huge impact on carers' ability to maintain their caring role and personal wellbeing, stay in work or study and plan for the future.

"Being able to deliver that support in an integrated fashion will be invaluable to making carers' lives easier. We can offer carers a wide variety of support to cater to individual needs all from one entry point – whether it's advising on the NDIS or My Aged Care, organising essential equipment, providing counselling or support groups, sharing knowledge through educational workshops, or holding social and therapeutic activities. The time and frustration that will save them is immeasurable."

In order to provide the additional funding needed to move to the new national model of carer support, the Government will means test the Carer Allowance, currently \$127.10 per fortnight, from September. Carers with an annual household income of \$250,000 or more will no longer be eligible.

"This change will only affect about one percent of Carer Allowance recipients, with all the savings going back into carer services," said Ms Kelly. "The Government appreciates that some people will feel disgruntled at having their benefit taken away, but it recognises that caring can add substantially to the usual costs of maintaining a household and believes that the new improved carer support services will make up for that".

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