

MEDIA RELEASE

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BUILDING A MILLION DOLLAR FUTURE FOR CARERS

Canberra's carers have a million reasons to smile. Their lives are being significantly enhanced by the generosity of Canberra's building industry. By next month the Shaw Building Group and its supporters will have raised over one million dollars to improve the wellbeing of carers in Canberra and the surrounding region.

For the last 13 years the Shaw Building Group, a local building and construction company, and its contractors and suppliers have been donating the money raised at their annual Charity Bowls Day to Carers ACT. So far they've raised over \$970,000, and with the next Bowls Day coming up on 7 March, they'll be smashing the one million dollar milestone.

Valdis Luks, managing director of the Shaw Building Group, explained that when the company was looking for a charity to support back in 2005, it wanted to commit to the local community and to a cause that many of its staff and supporters could relate to.

"We decided to support Carers ACT – a local charity providing a very important service in our community," Mr Luks said. "Just about everyone knew or was related to a carer and had seen how tough that job was. We wanted to help. Because Carers ACT wasn't high profile, it wasn't getting the corporate support that the mainstream charities were, so we felt that here was a local organisation where we could make a real difference."

And what a difference they've made. Carers ACT's CEO Lisa Kelly says her organisation is humbled by the generosity of Shaw Building Group and its supporters. Last year alone over \$100,000 was collected on the Bowls Day in just a few hours.

"It's been a significant partnership," said Ms Kelly. "Carers often tell us that they're so grateful that someone like Shaw Building Group acknowledges them and cares enough to help. Whether it's a tutor to help them finish high school, special equipment to help them move someone, study scholarships to improve their employability, a retreat to give them a break from caring, or a workshop to help them develop essential life skills – it's deeply valued."

"When you go to a carer retreat and see the heartfelt tears of joy and gratitude on a carer's face and hear them say that it's the first time in 20 years they've had a break from caring – that's priceless. "When you give a young carer a scholarship so they can get a trade and a life outside of caring and hear them say that the scholarship was lifechanging as it let them follow a dream that would otherwise have been unattainable – that's priceless."

“Thanks to Shaw Building Group, it’s these experiences and opportunities that we give carers that often makes a huge difference to their mental and physical wellbeing and allows them to keep caring,” said Ms Kelly.

Mr Luks says his dedicated staff work very hard to organise the Charity Bowls Day each year, aiming to achieve the best possible outcome for Carers ACT. Whether it’s gaining sponsorships or auction and raffle prizes, collecting and tallying donations, or generally coordinating and helping on the day....it all goes into making an event that’s grown and become more successful each year. “We’re very proud to see that our supporters, sponsors and industry associates have also shown a long term commitment to a cause they strongly believe in,” he said.

Richard Bumpus, Director of Pac Blue Constructions, says his organisation has been coming to the Bowls Day for years, aware of the need to support carers. “As well as being a lot of fun having a bit of friendly rivalry with 200 others from the building industry, we’re all aware of the true purpose of the day. When you realise that one in eight people is a carer, it brings home how important it is to support this organisation because there’ll probably always be someone we know who needs help from Carers ACT.”

Wayne Philp, Project Director at Custom Plumbing, agrees. “We have proudly supported Carers ACT through the Shaw Building Group for the last 13 years because we appreciate and admire what carers do, day in and day out. Carers are the people in the community that deal with all kinds of pressures as part of their everyday lives without wanting any recognition.”

Richard and Wayne’s comments reflect the growing realisation within the community that anyone at any time can be or need a carer. You never know when you could have a serious accident or develop a long-term illness and suddenly find yourself needing a carer or having to be a carer for a family member or friend, explained Ms Kelly.

“Caring can be a rewarding yet often challenging role - physically, mentally, financially – often turning your world upside down,” she said. “Acknowledging that role and providing practical and emotional support is often crucial to maintaining a carer’s wellbeing. For that reason Carers ACT is working hard to develop partnerships with other community organisations to broaden the network of support for carers.

"The work of organisations like the Shaw Building Group is a vital part of that network and I hope they inspire other groups to work with us to be partners in care."

If you would like to discuss how to receive carer support or to discuss a charity partnership with Carers ACT: Ph 02 6296 9900, email carers@carersact.org.au, or visit www.carersact.org.au

Annual Charity Bowls Day – Media welcome to attend
7 March 2019, 3-6pm at the Vikings Club in Greenway, ACT.
Corner of Athllon Drive and Rowland Rees Cres, Tuggeranong.

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