



## **Better Care for our Carers**

### ***New parliamentary inquiry announced***

The House of Representatives Family and Community Committee will conduct an inquiry to determine how to better meet the needs of carers who look after those with chronic illness, disability or frailty.

Committee Chair Annette Ellis welcomed the referral of this inquiry from the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin. A 2003 Australian Bureau of Statistics survey found there were over 2.5 million carers in Australia, including more than 470,000 primary carers – people who provide the most care to a person needing support. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare anticipates there will be more than 600,000 primary carers by 2013, with 70 per cent likely to be women.

In announcing the inquiry Ms Ellis said “Carers are often the hidden and unsung heroes who tirelessly look after family members and friends who cannot look after themselves. The demands placed on these carers often mean that they are exhausted, socially isolated and under extreme financial pressure, particularly as they are unable to access mainstream employment opportunities. Not surprisingly, carers have been found to have significantly worse physical health and psychological wellbeing than the general population.”

“The Committee embraces this opportunity to hear first-hand through a formal inquiry from carers about their day-to-day experiences and to learn more about the social, economic and physical costs of being a carer,” Ms Ellis said.

“A better understanding of the immediate and longer term challenges faced by carers will allow the Committee to make well-informed recommendations in the inquiry report on practical ways to improve and extend the support available for carers. While recently announced additional Federal funding for new supported accommodation facilities represents a step in the right direction, the Committee is keen to hear from those on the ground so that it can assess what more can be done to support the as yet unmet needs of carers.”

To better understand the challenges facing carers the Committee will inquire into and report on:

- the role and contribution of carers in society and how this should be recognised;
- the barriers to social and economic participation for carers, with a particular focus on helping carers to find and/or retain employment;
- the practical measures required to better support carers, including key priorities for action; and
- strategies to assist carers to access the same range of opportunities and choices as the wider community, including strategies to increase the capacity for carers to make choices within their caring roles, transition into and out of caring, and effectively plan for the future

The Committee invites interested organisations and individuals to make written submissions to the inquiry addressing the terms of reference by 4 July 2008. The Committee will report in early 2009.

**For media comment**, please contact the Committee Chair, Ms Annette Ellis, on (02) 6277 4372 (Parliament House) or (02) 6293 1344 (electorate office).

**For all other inquiries** please contact the Inquiry Secretary by phone on (02) 6277 4566 or by email [fchy.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:fchy.reps@aph.gov.au) or visit the Committee's website: [www.aph.gov.au/fchy](http://www.aph.gov.au/fchy)