

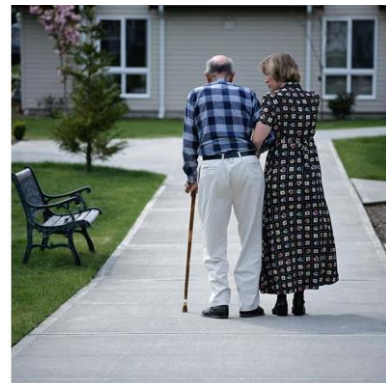
Let's show we care

The Health Column

21 Oct
2015

Sometimes we all need a break from our daily chores, but none are more deserving of a break than carers – dedicated, tireless, and often unpaid. National Carers Week, 11–17 October 2015, is about recognising and celebrating the outstanding contribution unpaid carers make to our nation.

Carers make an enormous contribution to our communities as well as our national economy, and National Carers Week provides you with a chance to take time out to learn about carers and caring in Australia.



This year, National Carers Week is asking you to pledge your support to help build a carer-friendly Australia. 'Show you care: make a free pledge to support unpaid carers'. Take 1 minute out of your day to show your support (you don't have to make a financial contribution). Together we can build a carer-friendly Australia.

According to the most current Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012 survey of disability, ageing and carers, there were 2.7 million family and friend carers over the age of 15 years in Australia – 12% of the nation's population.

Carers are a vital part of Australia's health system, as the foundation of our aged, disability, and community care systems. In 2010, Access Economics estimated that carers provide 1.32 billion hours of unpaid care each year, and that it would cost the Australian economy \$40.9 billion to replace their work with formal care services. On average, 40% of primary carers provide 40 or more hours per week of unpaid care.

Some 770,000 of Australia's carers are primary carers. Primary carers provide the majority of informal assistance with the activities of daily living to people with disabilities, plus one or more of the core support activities of mobility, self-care and communication. Of these primary carers, 51% provide care to a person over the age of 65 years.

Carers are unsung heroes and often face serious challenges:

- In the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index survey, carers were shown to have the lowest collective wellbeing of any population group investigated.
- Carers have an average stress rating that is classified as moderate depression.
- Carers are more likely to experience chronic pain.

- According to ABS 2012 survey of disability, ageing and carers, primary carers were significantly more likely to have a disability themselves – 37% of primary carers have a disability, compared with 16% of people, who are not in a carer's role.
- Carers are more socially isolated. In 2012, only 47% of carers who provided care for 40 hours per week or more reported participation in at least one cultural or physical activity, away from home.
- Almost two-thirds (65%) of primary carers reside in a household with gross household income in the lowest two quintiles, compared with 36% of non-carers.
- The median gross personal income for a primary carer is \$400 per week, and for a non-carer is \$600 per week.
- Some 55% of primary carers are on a Government pension or allowance and 54% of primary carers have difficulty meeting everyday costs as a result of a caring role.

Many carers are young men and women. In Australia, there are more than 150,000 carers, who are under the age of 18 years. These young people may be providing care for a parent, partner, sibling, their own child, relative, or friend. Many of these young carers indicate that caring is a positive experience for them. However, research clearly indicates that when not adequately supported, their own health and wellbeing can be seriously affected by their roles.

Anyone at any time can become an unpaid carer and it is our job to ensure that we have a carer-friendly Australia where everyone, including carers, have a fair go. Carers contribute so much to our collective communities and yet they often experience social isolation, find it harder to maintain employment, enter the workforce, or participate in education.

A carer-friendly Australia is one where unpaid carers are recognised and supported during and after their caring role, across all spectrums of society. Imagine the impact we would make if we had one pledge for every one of Australia's 2.7million unpaid carers? You can make a difference by pledging today! At: www.carersweek.com.au/make-a-pledge/

You can get more detailed information on Carers from the Self Care Fact Card titled *Carer Support* available from pharmacies providing the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Self Care health information.

For the nearest Self Care pharmacy location phone the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia on 1300 369 772, or go to www.psa.org.au 'Supporting practice' then 'Self Care', and then 'Find a Self Care pharmacy'.