

Carers

AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN CARERS DISABILITY

No other group works as hard, contributes as much to the economy, but receives as little in recognition or financial reward as Australia's carers. Our society owes a profound debt to those who care for others day-to-day and we must do all we can to lessen the burdens placed upon them

Our Action Plan

- Establish a National Office for Carers with responsibility to
 - develop a national carer framework
 - advise on the impact of new policies on carers
- Increase the rate of carer payment from \$215.65/week to \$383.25 (75% of the standard minimum wage) and double the rate of the carer allowance to \$98.50 per week
- Convert the \$1,000 Carer Bonus into an annual, indexed payment
- Extend eligibility for the carer bonus to other carers who receive the Carer Allowance and who also receive Centrelink income support, particularly carers who are recipients of the Aged Pension and sole parent benefits
- Introduce simplified, less invasive eligibility assessments
- Explore the introduction of a Carer Superannuation Scheme
- Fund a carer health program
- Increase tax concessions for carers related expenses
- Increase access to employment, education and training without fear of losing financial assistance
- Support the right to flexible work hours and part-time work for carers
- Establish a national one-stop carer workforce participation gateway, an Employers for Carers program, provide financial and other incentives to encourage employers to participate
- A uniform system between States and Territories with reciprocal and transferable arrangements for concessions afforded to carers accompanying people with disabilities
- Additional support to carers providing in-home care through increasing Home and Community Care funding by 30%, abolishing HACC charges, increased and more flexible access to respite care
- Prioritised focus on the unique needs of both older and younger carers and those in rural and regional areas
- A review of Commonwealth/State funding arrangements in disability and carer support services

"The role of carers in our society is one that government could never replace, and could bankrupt itself trying to. We all owe a profound debt to those who dedicate themselves to caring for others."

**Senator Bartlett
Family & Community
Services Spokesperson**

Carers

- A nationally coordinated response to unmet need in accommodation, respite and personal attendant services, with population-based benchmark funding
- Increase funding to carers' advocacy and support programs that aim to reduce isolation, and represent carer needs to government policy makers
- Fund a specific national carer research programme
- Call for a National Carer Strategy
- Introduce a Family Responsibilities and Carers' Rights Act (as recommended by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in its report – *It's About Time: women, men, work and family*)
- Introduce a care cost reimbursements for community care

The Issues

- In 2005 an Access Economics estimate of the value of carers to the Australian economy stood at \$16.6billion.
- The 2007 budget did not have a financial increase in support for carers. The budget allowed one off carer bonuses of \$1000, which has been given in previous years. However there was no increase in ongoing carer support.

Priority Groups:

The Democrats have identified four priority groups requiring specific strategies:

Young and Ageing Carers

Young carers face significant barriers to employment, education and training, and even to participating in community life. Young carers require targeted assistance to ensure the risks of isolation, stress, depression, poverty and reduced opportunities they experience are minimised.

As our population ages, so too do our carers, with many continuing their physically and mentally challenging work well into later years. As their capacity to continue caring diminishes, specific strategies are essential to ensure support, respite and appropriate accommodation options are available.

Parents of children with a disability

Many start caring at a young age and continue for most of their working life and into old age, foregoing employment and education opportunities, reducing earning capacity, and their ability to meet expenses such as mortgages and retirement savings. Strategies recognising the additional stresses upon families are essential.

Carers of the profoundly disabled

Caring for someone with a profound disability presents additional challenges in an environment where high support needs often go unmet, and services and programs are not flexible enough to meet changing needs. Government must ensure that families are assisted to meet these challenges without the creation of additional stresses and uncertainties.



CONTACT US

(03) 9416 1880

Lv 1, 62 Wellington Parade, East Melbourne VIC 3002

inquiries@democrats.org.au

Authorised by Jack Evans, 5 Poinciana Place, Wanneroo WA 6065
Printed by Senator Lyn Allison, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600