

MEDIA RELEASE

9 October 2017

CARERS COUNT! CARING FOR OUR CARERS

Anyone at any time can become a carer and anyone at any time may need care. Whether it's supporting a disabled partner, helping a sibling with depression, raising an autistic child, or dealing with a parent living with dementia, caring is becoming an increasing role for many. Yet most of us probably have little understanding of what a carer's life is really like, how their world can turn upside down and how important it is to give support.

National Carers Week (15-21 October) is an ideal opportunity to learn about caring and carers – those unpaid individuals who look after family members and friends who have a disability, are ageing or have an ongoing mental or other illness. They are a vital part of Australia's health system and the foundation of our aged, disability, palliative and community care systems. Yet they are often unheralded and unnoticed.

Caring can be a deeply rewarding experience and a cherished labour of love. Phoebe, who cares for her mother with dementia, says "The best thing I have done for my mum in my life has been my commitment of care. It has made us closer."

Yet while there are certainly rewards, most carers also face numerous difficult challenges in trying to balance family, work, caring and their own needs says Lisa Kelly, CEO of Carers ACT. "These challenges include financial hardship, social isolation, health and wellbeing issues, frustration, exhaustion and extreme stress.

"That's why Carers ACT is so committed to providing carers with practical and emotional supports so they feel re-energised, empowered and socially connected and better able to face these pressures," she said.

Carers who tap into these support services find them a 'lifeline' and urge others to seek support early. "Be kind to yourself," advised Phoebe. "Just take one day at a time and give yourself permission to cry, laugh, scream, eat chocolate and share what you've learned with others."

There's a lot you can do to make a carer's life easier. Often, it's the little things that can make a huge difference. Here are some suggestions:

1. Offer to drive them to/from activities
2. Prepare some meals
3. Clean their house
4. Prune their garden
5. Stop by for a cuppa and chat
6. Babysit
7. Help them sort out paperwork (particularly if English is not their first language)
8. Invite them to your social events (and be understanding if they often cancel at the last minute)
9. Learn about the illness or disability they're dealing with (so you better understand them and the person they care for)
10. Send them a 'thank you' on the thank you wall at www.carersweek.com.au

Where to go for help

Carers ACT:	Call 1800 052 222 or visit www.carersact.org.au
My Aged Care:	1800 200 422 or visit www.myagedcare.gov.au
Carer Gateway:	1800 422 737 or visit www.carergateway.gov.au
NDIS:	1800 800 110 or visit www.ndis.gov.au

Media Contact: Eva Hickman, Carers ACT Communications Officer, 6296 9933 or 0481 254 953