



MEDIA STATEMENT

28 March 2024

Carers deserve improved rights & recognition

Kate Chaney MP, Federal Independent for Curtin, has urged the Federal Government to adopt all recommendations from the recent Carers Inquiry conducted by the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs.

Ms Chaney, a member of that Committee, has told the House of Representatives that carers play an essential and undervalued role across the Australian community, including her electorate of Curtin, with the current Carers Recognition Act failing to provide any enforceable rights for carers.

Since being elected, the Independent Member for Curtin has routinely been contacted by constituents who are quietly supporting others in the community, from children with an intellectual disability, a partner with a chronic neurological disease such as MS, a parent with dementia or a friend struggling with their mental health.

In her speech to the House this week, Ms Chaney shared the experience of a couple in their 80s, who live in Curtin with their 40-year-old son with Downs Syndrome. They have been trying to plan for their son's future after they pass but are struggling to navigate the many systems and services such as NDIS, Centrelink, Medicare and banks.

Ms Chaney said it was time carers were recognised as experts in their loved one's care and given the appropriate respect.

Comments attributable to Kate Chaney MP:

"Throughout the Inquiry it struck me that carers are generous and selfless with their time, energy and resources, because they are caring for a loved one. Yet, as a society, we seem to take for granted the toll it takes on each carer. As a community we must do better.

"Caring can, and most often does, affect a carer's employment, financial security, housing, superannuation, health, wellbeing and relationships. Carers need to be recognised as experts in the care of their loved one and supported to navigate systems such as NDIS, Medicare and Centrelink.

"The government must update legislation to establish enforceable rights for carers, to assist them in navigating services on behalf of their loved one.

"There should also be clear requirements for public service agencies to support carers. At a minimum, they should be able to access counselling, training and respite. The report also recommends access to an income tax credit on returning to the workforce.

"The new National Carer Strategy must include targeted supports for groups and a community education campaign. It's no good making supports available to carers if they don't know they're available, or how to access them when they're needed."

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Media contact: Emma-Jane Morcombe – 0439 272 262

Electorate office

Cnr The Boulevard and Floreat Ave
Floreat WA 6014
PO Box 186 Floreat WA 6014

T. 08 9388 0288
E. kate.chaney.mp@aph.gov.au
W. www.katechaney.com.au

Parliamentary Office

PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

T. 02 6277 4655