



# National Respite for Carers Program (NRCP) and other Australian Government support for carers

A carer is a person who, through family relationship or friendship, looks after a frail older person or someone with a disability or chronic illness. Carers look after these people in the community or in their own homes.

Caring for someone full-time is physically and emotionally demanding. So, from time to time, carers need to be able to take breaks from their caring roles. This break is called 'respite'.

## National Respite for Carers Program

The Australian Government provides funding to assist carers with information, respite care and other support through the National Respite for Carers Program. More than 650 respite services and 54 Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres across Australia are funded under the program. Funding for the Program for 2011-12 is approximately \$202 million.

## Community respite services for carers

Community-based respite services are funded to provide respite opportunities in a variety of settings and service types such as:

- part or full day respite in day care centres;
- in-home respite services, including overnight care and personal care services;
- overnight community cottage respite;
- activity programs in the community;
- respite for carers of people with dementia and challenging behaviours; and
- respite for employed carers.

Funding is also provided for Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres to provide carers with information about a range of respite options and assistance to obtain respite.

## Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres specialise in helping people find information on services in their local area. Centres have local knowledge about:

- personal, nursing and respite care;
- household help, home modification and maintenance;
- transport and meal services;
- disability services;
- day care and therapy centres;
- assessment, including Aged Care Assessment Teams;
- special services for dementia;
- continence assistance;
- support for carers;
- Community Aged Care Packages;
- aged care homes;
- a range of allied health care, such as podiatry and physiotherapy; and
- support groups.

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres can be contacted from anywhere in Australia by calling **1800 052 222\***.

For emergency respite support outside standard business hours call **1800 059 059\***.



## **Carers Australia National Carer Counselling Program**

Carers are able to obtain counselling through the network of Carers Associations in each state and territory. Counselling is provided by qualified counsellors on issues that are specific to the carer's needs such as depression, stress-related issues, grief and loss and coping skills.

More information on these services can be obtained by calling **1800 242 636\***.

## **Other carer support services**

### **Home and Community Care**

Other services for carers are available through the Home and Community Care (HACC) program. The HACC program provides services to support frail older people and their carers so that they can remain in the community. Some of the services that can be arranged through HACC include home help, personal care, meals-on-wheels, home nursing and respite.

### **Residential respite care**

Residential respite care provides short-term care in Australian Government subsidised aged care homes for people who are in temporary need of care and who intend to return to the community. Residential respite care may be used on a planned or emergency basis to help with carer stress, illness, holidays or if the carer is unavailable for any reason.

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres can help carers obtain residential respite.

### **Access to residential respite care**

Except for emergency situations, a person must be assessed as needing residential respite care by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) before entry to an Australian Government subsidised service.

ACAT telephone numbers may be listed in the 'Age Page' of your local telephone book or may be provided by your local doctor or hospital. Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres can also refer people to their local ACAT.

A person can have up to 63 days of respite care in a financial year, with the possibility of extensions of 21 days at a time if an ACAT considers this necessary.

## **Fees and charges for respite care**

People who enter and receive respite in Australian Government subsidised aged care homes can be asked to pay a fee.

The current maximum fee rates are available at **www.health.gov.au** or by calling **1800 200 422\***.

A booking fee may be charged to assist in organising respite. This will secure a respite place. It is a prepayment of respite care fees and not an additional payment. This fee, however, cannot be more than a full week's fee, or 25 per cent of the fee for the entire stay, whichever amount is the lower.

Respite residents do not pay an accommodation charge or accommodation bond, nor do they have to pay any additional income tested charges.

Community-based respite services charge fees according to the type of service being used. This can vary from a sessional fee for a morning or afternoon in a day care centre to an hourly rate for in-home respite.

## **Other financial assistance for carers**

The Australian Government provides financial support to carers through:

- Carer Allowance; and
- Carer Payment.

To find out more about the Carer Allowance and Carer Payment, contact Centrelink on **13 27 17\*** or visit their website at **www.centrelink.gov.au**



## Information about services can also be obtained from:

- Home and Community Care service coordinators;
- Aged Care Assessment Teams;
- Community-based agencies;
- Community nurses;
- State and Territory Health Departments; and
- State and Territory Community Services and Disability Departments.

## Where do I go for more information?

Important numbers and websites for carers

- Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres **1800 052 222\***  
or for emergency respite support outside standard business hours **1800 059 059\***
- Carers Australia Network of Carers Associations **1800 242 636\***
- For information on aged care call **1800 200 422\***
- Dementia Helpline **1800 100 500\***
- National Continence Helpline **1800 330 066\***
- Department of Health and Ageing website **www.health.gov.au**
- Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre website **www.commcarelink.health.gov.au.**

### \*Cost of phone calls

Calls to 1800 numbers are generally free to the caller when made from a land line.

Calls to 13 or 1300 numbers are charged at a low fixed amount to the caller when made from a land line.

All calls made from mobile phones are charged at the rates applicable to each phone provider.

All calls made from public phones are charged at the rates applicable to each phone provider.

**All information in this publication is correct as at November 2011**

Disclaimer: This document is only a guide to the Government's law and policies, and cannot take account of individual circumstances. The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing recommends that you seek appropriate professional advice relevant to your particular situation.

**For information on Aged Care call 1800 200 422\* or visit [www.agedcareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.agedcareaustralia.gov.au)**