



One Door Mental Health supports informal mental health carer report findings

One Door Mental Health welcomes the recognition of the pivotal contribution informal carers make to the economy and those living with a mental illness as highlighted in a new report commissioned by Mind Australia.

The report, *The Economic Value of Informal Mental Health Caring in Australia*, shows that the benefits carers supply to the Australian economy is \$13.2 billion per year while the support they receive from Government is merely \$1 billion per year.

Sue Sacker OAM, General Manager – Strategy and Innovation of One Door Mental Health says that government needs to make identifying and supporting informal carers a priority.

“We often find that informal carers are parents, spouses or relatives of someone living with a mental illness; sometimes it is children. These people make enormous personal sacrifices to care for their loved ones, including their own general wellbeing, physical health, family life and income and employment, yet they go unnoticed and unsupported by our Government,” said Ms Sacker.

“Despite their massive contribution, most informal carers don’t always identify as carers. They are simply doing everything they can to help the people they love.”

Ms Sacker calls on Government to take the first step to supporting carers by funding carer supports separately in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

“We are in a time of unprecedented uncertainty with the introduction of the NDIS. Seismic shifts in funding are threatening the guarantee of access to services for those who do not qualify for an NDIS package which will place additional strain on carers. Carer needs should always be a consideration when planning NDIS packages for people living with a mental illness, including an independent funded item from the NDIS recipient’s needs.”

“The NDIS roll-out will change the way carer services, including much needed respite, are provided. In 2009, One Door introduced a carer respite program after many years of advocating and campaigning for the needs of mental health carers. With the transition to the NDIS this program will now disappear,” said Ms Sacker.

An estimated 240,000 Australians care for an adult living with a mental illness; a substantial proportion (14.7 per cent) of them are young people, under the age of 25.

“Every day mental health carers work tirelessly for those they love and are often faced with stigma and the frustration of a fragmented system. Sometimes the experience feels like they need to fight a system that is supposed to be there to help those they love.

“We need to put real effort into identifying informal carers so that they can access supports that are currently available.

“Carers are beyond doubt the unsung heroes amongst us,” said Ms Sacker.

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For further information or to interview Sue Sacker, please contact:

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Note for Editors: Through One Door Mental Health, people living with mental illness and their families can find an inclusive community, innovative services and strong advocacy. For more than 30 years One Door has designed and delivered expert mental health programs now available through the NDIS. Creating a world in which people with a mental illness are valued and treated as equals is at the heart of everything we do.