



**The Hon Julie Bishop MP
Minister for Ageing**

MEDIA RELEASE

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\$374 MILLION RESPITE BOOST TO SUPPORT CARERS

Older Australians and their carers will have easier access to respite care and carer support following the announcement today of \$374 million in Australian Government funding for respite services by the Federal Minister for Ageing, Julie Bishop.

“Australia’s ageing population means that more older Australians will need the support of carers to remain living at home and in their community,” Ms Bishop said.

“The Australian Government recognises that caring is a demanding and challenging role, and that carers sometimes also need care, including by taking a break through respite,” Ms Bishop said.

“That is why we are providing this \$375 million in funding for respite services.

“This funding means that more carers who are working, or want an overnight or weekend break to catch up with friends, or see family, or even have the holiday that the rest of us take for granted, can do so knowing that their loved one is receiving high quality care in a home-like environment in a their own home, in a residential aged care home, or in a cottage-style retreat home in the community.

“In the 2005 Federal Budget the Australian Government increased support for carers, including a \$207 million package of extra respite over four years, particularly for working carers and those in rural and remote areas, and further financial support in the form of a one-off payment for people in receipt of Carer Allowance and Carer Payment.

“Since coming to office the Australian Government has delivered an almost sevenfold increase in funding for the National Respite for Carers Program, from less than \$20 million in 1996-97 to more than \$135 million in 2005-06.

“From 1 July 2005 the Australian Government will provide \$189 million through contracts for 414 projects which will provide respite services to more than 90,000 carers across Australia.

They include:

- \$262,000 over three years to Carers NT extend their mobile respite services remote areas in the Northern Territory; and
- \$607,000 over three years to Helping Hand Aged Care Inc in South Australia for centre-based and host family respite for carers of people with dementia and younger people with disabilities.

“The new funding arrangements will see an average of an extra 20 per cent in funding provided to each funded project, as well as streamlined administration and reduced duplication between services, which will enable more funding to be provided to support carers,” Ms Bishop said.

“The Australian Government is also providing \$182 million over the next three years to the 54 co-located Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres and Commonwealth Carelink Centres and two Carer Respite Centres in Northern Territory, to make it easier for carers to access respite as well as information about aged care services.

“Through these initiatives the Australian Government is realising our vision for a world class system of aged care that provides high quality, affordable and accessible services to meet the individual needs and choices of older Australians.”

The new contract arrangements follow an open competitive application process for community care services, which was announced earlier in 2005. The process formed part of the Australian Government’s implementation of *A New Strategy for Community Care – The Way Forward* document, which was released in August 2004.

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