



6 January 2023

## Joint statement from Carers Australia and Mental Health Carers Australia

Carers Australia and Mental Health Carers Australia welcome Minister Butler and Assistant Minister McBride's [announcement](#) last week that the Albanese Government will invest \$7.5 million to establish two independent national mental health lived experience peak bodies; one for people living with mental ill health and the other for carers, family and kin who care for those with mental ill health.

**This commitment is a substantial investment that recognises and values the importance of lived experience voices in the critical reform processes to Australia's mental health system.**

It signals that the Albanese government is serious about sustainable and co-designed mental health reform, and it gives hope that the mental health system will truly support the lives and needs of the people it serves at the same time as recognising the key role families, friends and carers have to play in mental health care. The peak bodies will be established following many years of grassroots advocacy for genuine representative lived experience consumer, carer and family voices.

Carers Australia's 2022 [Carer Wellbeing Survey](#) results indicate that carers of people with mental ill-health continue to be significantly more likely than other Australians to have concerning low levels of wellbeing, with 55.2% having low wellbeing compared to 25.4% of non-carers, and twice as likely to experience moderate to high levels of psychological distress. More so, carers of people with mental ill health / psychosocial disability report some of the lowest levels of wellbeing and these levels have remained consistently troubling across years.

Mental Health Australia's [Report to the Nation](#) similarly found that families and carers of people with mental illness were more likely than others to have themselves been diagnosed with a mental health condition. On average, they also rated their own mental health lower than non-carers.

The establishment of a lived experience peak body for carers, family and kin in mental health presents an opportunity to address the concerns raised in the data. This announcement also provides an opportunity to consider as a priority, the needs of children and young people, of whom over 20% have a parent living with mental ill health<sup>1</sup>. This includes young carers, where the

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrea Reupert & Darryl Maybery (2016) What do we know about families where parents have a mental illness? A systematic review, *Child & Youth Services*, 37:2, 98-111, DOI: [10.1080/0145935X.2016.1104037](https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2016.1104037)



Productivity Commission's [Final Report](#) on the Mental Health Inquiry states that about 12% of mental health carers in Australia are aged between 15 and 25 years.

"Mental health services often focus on the needs of the consumer without considering that the person providing care may also require mental health support, and in fact may also be a consumer of mental health services. We look forward to working alongside these two new lived experience peaks" said Carers Australia CEO, Alison Brook "Carers play an integral role in our communities, and research increasingly shows that it has never been more important to recognise their contribution and invest in their wellbeing."

Mental Health Carers Australia Executive Officer, Katrina Armstrong said that "we are thrilled that the Albanese Government has recognised and valued the importance of lived experience voices in reforming the mental health system. We look forward to working with the Government to design and deliver the new peak body for families, carers and kin in mental health."

#### **About Carers Australia and the National Carer Network**

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing *all* Australia's carers, advocating to influence policies and services at a national level. Our Members are the National Carer Network, which consists of Carers NSW, Carers ACT, Carers Victoria, Carers Tasmania, Carers SA, Carers WA, Carers NT, and Carers Queensland, who deliver a range of essential carer services across states and territories.

**For media enquiries please contact Alison Brook, CEO of Carers Australia, on 0412 422 891 or (02) 6122 9902**

#### **About Mental Health Carers Australia**

Mental Health Carers Australia is the only national advocacy group solely concerned with the well-being and promotion of the needs of families and carers of people living with mental ill health. We achieve this by influencing systemic change to improve the family and carer experience of the mental health system. Mental Health Carers Australia is made up of seven member organisations: Mental Health Carers NSW, Tandem Victoria, Arafmi QLD, HelpingMinds WA, MIFA NT, Mental Health Families and Friends Tasmania and Mind Australia, all dedicated to improving outcomes for families and friends in mental health.

**Media contact: Katrina Armstrong [eo@mentalhealthcarersaustralia.org.au](mailto:eo@mentalhealthcarersaustralia.org.au)**