

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **COVID-19 Impacts Tasmania's Family carers**

Carers Tasmania has been in continual contact with unpaid family carers throughout the state as the COVID-19 situation has unfolded.

There are over 85,000 unpaid carers in Tasmania, a 1:6 ratio compared to the national ratio of 1:8.

"Carers have been affected just as much as anyone during this pandemic... Perhaps even more," said David Brennan, Chief Executive of Carers Tasmania.

The spread of the COVID-19 has increased the load on carers, with several residential care facilities locking down or increasing restrictions on the length of stays for much-needed respite.

"It's not only the care recipients who are at risk during these times, but also those who care for them. Over 32% of carers have a disability themselves, while more than 22% of carers are over 65 years old."

"We're currently in the process of contacting our database of carers over 65, to check-in and find out how the spread of COVID-19 is affecting them," said Mr. Brennan.

"What we are finding is increasing numbers of carers, especially aged carers or those caring for each other to self-isolate entirely, which includes cancelling their regularly scheduled in-home supports. As well as in-home cancellations, disturbingly carers are also postponing essential medical appointments for both them and their care recipient."

"The introduction of Telehealth consultations has been a positive introduction for those individuals deciding to self-isolate."

"We're also learning that carers that have isolated themselves are finding it difficult to purchase essential items to fulfil their role, including protective equipment such as hand sanitizers and masks."

Carers Tasmania asked over 800 Tasmanians who have been caring alongside participating in the workforce how they've been affected. 80% of survey respondents were aged 45 or older, with 44% spending more than 40 hours a week in a caring role.

When asked if their jobs had been affected as a result of COVID-19, 46% of respondents stated that they'd experienced changes in their employment status. Of these, 17% have lost their job, 47% have seen a reduction in hours, and 36% have been temporarily stood down.

Carers play a critical role in the economy of Australia, with over 1.9 billion hours of care provided nationwide to the tune of \$60.3 billion in replacement value.



Carers Australia has called for the Federal Government's Coronavirus supplement to be extended to recipients of Carer Payments, as well as those receiving Disability Support Pensions and Age Pensions.

"We echo the sentiment of Carers Australia that extension of the \$550 Coronavirus Supplement to those on Carer Payments would provide much-needed relief for carers throughout Tasmania.

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### **About Carers Tasmania**

Carers Tasmania is a non-profit body supporting informal carers across the state that has been operating continuously since 1993. Carers Tasmania has offices in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie.

### **About carers**

An informal, unpaid carer is a family member or friend that cares for someone that has a disability, chronic or life-limiting illness, is frail aged, has a mental health illness, alcohol or other drug related issue.

Informal carers are distinct from paid support workers who are colloquially also called carers but are fully employed and remunerated with all the benefits of employment. Conversely, family carers perform their caring duties without remuneration.

### **Media contact**

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