

CARING FOR CARERS

Position:

- FAMILY FIRST believes unpaid family carers do an amazing job but, too often, their tireless work goes unrecognised and unrewarded. Access Economics estimates that almost 500,000 Australians are primary carers with a total of 2.6 million people providing some care for family or friends;
- FAMILY FIRST understands that tens of thousands of carers worry about what will happen to their loved ones when they can no longer care for them. Governments rely on the goodwill of family carers to look after people with chronic illness or disabilities. Carers end up carrying extra burdens due to shorter hospital stays, more day surgery and less access to residential accommodation for their loved ones;
- FAMILY FIRST believes carers are getting a raw deal from both sides of politics, and both Federal and State Governments. Carers are the only group of workers who do not receive annual leave or the chance of retirement. The Federal Government only provides up to four weeks of annual respite to parent carers over the age of 70. Respite is only provided to other carers if there are funds left over;
- FAMILY FIRST does not believe full-time primary carers should have to wait until they are in their 70s before they can earn a decent break. Four weeks of annual respite would help relieve stress, keep caring families together and people with disabilities out of institutions. It is more than reasonable as it does not even equate to having every Saturday off.

Actions:

- FAMILY FIRST wants to give all primary carers one month's holiday each year. FAMILY FIRST wants carers receiving the Carer Payment to be able to apply for a payment of \$4,320 (four times average weekly earnings) for a month, which they can use to pay for care services while they take their annual leave. This new payment is in addition to existing respite care entitlements;

- FAMILY FIRST believes the Government should fund age-sensitive hostel and village living accommodation for people with a disability, similar to that provided in the aged care sector. This will in particular assist aged carers no longer able to care for their loved one;
- FAMILY FIRST wants the Government to introduce a population-based benchmark funding model for the disability sector similar to the aged care sector. The current model is purely historic and is a poor system for calculating the amount of funding the disability sector needs;
- FAMILY FIRST wants case managers appointed to carers to help them manage and access appropriate support services for their loved ones.