

# Carers flag respite shortage

## Push to require providers to offer respite.

CARERS AUSTRALIA says its new survey of organisations that help carers access respite clearly shows that “demand for residential respite care is not being met.”

As well as mandated provision of respite and improved government subsidies to residential aged care providers, the peak body called for greater availability of other forms of respite, such as cottage style accommodation for overnight and weekend breaks.

There is an estimated 2.7 million informal carers in Australia, 400,000 of whom provide care for someone aged over 65 and 300,000 support someone living with dementia.

Carers Australia says it undertook the survey because it was increasingly receiving reports of difficulties finding respite care, particularly from services that offer respite advice to carers.

Its survey of 112 services, from metropolitan and regional and remote areas, found most agencies reported high or very high demand for emergency respite (74 per cent) and planned residential respite (88 per cent).

“Only 35 per cent of respondents were able to offer respite care most of the time, with a further 46 per cent able to offer respite care some of the time,” the survey found.

The types of care that were rated most difficult to access were weekend respite (72 per cent), emergency respite (68 per cent) and planned respite (66 per cent).

Common suggestions for improving respite were having dedicated respite beds, being able to access respite without an ACAT assessment and a central system for checking availability and making bookings.

Aged and Community Services Australia said the recommendations were “common-sense steps” that could be implemented to alleviate current pressures.

Experts have previously flagged the high rates of depression and stress among carers and the need to provide better supports. ■