



MEDIA RELEASE

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Mental Health Carers need support

Scrapping the \$1600 annual bonuses paid to Australia's carers will hurt not only carers, but many mental health consumers, the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) said today.

There are reports that the Rudd Government is going to axe the \$1600 Carer Bonus and replace it with a \$500 higher utilities allowance.

The loss of the \$1100 that has been part of the carers allowance for the last 4 years will create greater financial stress on carers and consumers.

Carers need this small payment to help with medication, food, transport and accessing the services many people take for granted. The utilities allowance cannot substitute for what the carer bonus can buy.

The suggestion that the Carer Bonus is pork-barrelling fails to acknowledge the role of this vital financial supplement in assisting thousands of struggling carers and their loved ones.

Mental health carers are vital to the health and well being of many people with a mental illness. They are often the backbone of care plans and ongoing support, as well as being responsible for accessing appropriate services. The importance of their role cannot be overstated.

The MHCA is hoping that Minister Jenny Macklin will reconsider this proposed cut once she has consulted with mental health and other carers, and has a first-hand understanding of the increased hardship and suffering removal of this bonus will cause.

The MHCA urges the Rudd Government to take account of how this proposed cut will impact on vulnerable Australians.

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