



PRIME MINISTER

100/92

(EMBARGOED UNTIL 9.00 AM MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 1992)

14 September 1992

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: CARING FOR THE CARERS

The Federal Government is committed to supporting carers and recognising the valuable contribution they make to Australian society, the Prime Minister, Paul Keating, said today.

Mr Keating joined with Health, Housing and Community Services Minister, Brian Howe; Aged, Family and Health Services Minister, Peter Staples; Social Security Minister, Dr Neal Blewett; and Veterans' Affairs Minister, Ben Humphreys, to launch the Government's policy statement, "Commitment to Carers".

"It is appropriate that the launch of this Statement coincides with Australia's first National Carers Awareness Week," Mr Keating said.

"Commitment to Carers offers a comprehensive National response to the needs of our carers.

"The Statement builds on the recent Budget announcement of a \$93 million package to support carers and better meet their needs.

"Carers are the human face behind many of the Government's social welfare programs.

"They make a tremendously valuable contribution to Australian society.

"We must recognise the personal sacrifices they often have to make in looking after the more vulnerable members of our society."

Mr Howe and Mr Staples said the provision of support and assistance to carers was as important as support and assistance for those who actually need care.

"Carers need to know that we are committed to looking after their needs - that we are providing appropriate support," they said.

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"Commitment to Carers will underpin the Government's objectives in this important area of social policy."

Mr Howe said the Federal Government provided a comprehensive range of health, aged care and disability services to meet the needs of frail older people, people with dementia, people with long-term illnesses and people with a disability.

"The provision of these services is important to the achievement of social justice in Australia," he said.

"Social justice is about quality of life and providing choices and opportunities for all members of society."

"One of the problems facing those ageing veterans who served this country so well in times of need, is the difficulty they face in continuing to live in their own homes," Mr Humphreys said.

"For this reason, I welcome this further initiative by the Federal Government in assisting veterans and their dependents to continue living secure, independent lives in the local community."

Mr Staples said funding provided by the Government to run activities throughout the week were aimed at promoting community awareness of carers needs, and support for carers themselves.

Activities include seminars and film exhibitions to raise the profile of carers and their efforts.

"The theme for the Week is 'I support carers'," Mr Staples said.

"I hope that more and more Australians will adopt this motto as they understand and appreciate the importance of the carer's role in our community."

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