



Alzheimer's
Australia
Living with dementia

The Hon. Justine Elliot MP
Minister for Ageing
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

I am pleased to provide you with a copy of ***Respite Care for People Living With Dementia: "It's more than just a short break"***.

The new report, which is based on the experience of carers and statistical evidence, concludes that the provision of respite is markedly less than optimal. Sub optimal use of respite is evident on the supply side because use is below the level of provision of some types of respite, and on the demand side because consumers are unable to access the kinds of respite they need, when they need it, or are reluctant to use the services that are available.

There is evidence from the 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers that 27% of carers of people with dementia who said they needed respite did not access it. Compared to all carers, carers of people with dementia were 50% more likely to need and to have used respite, and more than 10 times more likely to say they needed respite but had not used it

The recent Access Economics report ***Making Choices: Future Dementia Care*** provided yet more evidence that respite care services are valued by carers of people with dementia. The survey conducted by Access Economics indicated that carers valued service options including regular respite 48% more highly than care options that did not.

A number of recommendations are made in the new report. The most important are those directed towards making services more flexible and more responsive and to reducing barriers to the use of respite by people living with dementia. These include a trial of consumer directed care in respite services, a redirection of funds from residential care respite to the National Respite for Carers Program, increased access to education for carers and an increased priority for dementia respite services.

I believe the Report is a useful basis for discussion of the future direction of respite care services. Perhaps you would consider asking your Dementia Advisory Committee or the Ageing Consultative Committee to consider the report. The report will be released at the Alzheimer's Australia Conference on 5 June in Adelaide. I have made a copy of the report together with our draft media release available to your office.

I would be pleased to provide further information to your office if required.

Yours sincerely,

Glenn Rees
Chief Executive Officer

20 May 2009