

23 March 2023

Australian Government  
Productivity Commission  
Carer Leave Inquiry

By online submission

To whom it may concern

**Re: RANZCP Submission – Carer Leave Position Paper Response**

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) welcome the opportunity to provide a submission on the Productivity Commission's Position Paper - [A case for an extended unpaid carer leave entitlement?](#) - arising from the findings of the [Carer Leave Inquiry](#).

The RANZCP is a membership organisation with over 7,900 members, which prepares doctors to be medical specialists in the field of psychiatry, supports and enhances clinical practice, advocates for people affected by mental illness and advises governments on mental health care.

In our previous [submission](#) to the inquiry, the RANZCP detailed our support for the provision of minimum statutory entitlements for extended unpaid carer leave to provide informal care to older people who are frail and living at home, concurrent with alternative ways to support informal carers provide support to older Australians. The RANZCP subsequently supports the following draft findings of the [Position Paper](#):

- *Draft finding 1 - An entitlement to extended unpaid leave for carers of older people should be designed to maximise the net benefits to the community*

The RANZCP also supports a minimum statutory entitlement for an employee to take extended unpaid leave that will help relieve the burden on informal carers and support the health, independence, dignity and quality of life of both older Australians and their carers. This is pertinent, noting that carers are [2.5 times more likely](#) to report low wellbeing than the average Australian adult and twice as likely to report having poor health.

- *Draft finding 4 - The case for an entitlement is similar for all carers of people with disability of illness*

As is the case for carers of older Australians, the provision of entitlements to all carers would assist them in caring for both the person experiencing a mental health condition and their own needs. Please see RANZCP [Position Statement 76: Partnering with carers in mental healthcare](#), for further information on the extensive role of carers in supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of those experiencing a mental health condition.



The RANZCP also identifies the following opportunities to further improve the Position Paper. Within Chapter 8 – ‘*How else could carers of older people be supported?*’ – the RANZCP advocates for recommendations to:

- *Support for informal carers’ role as part of a multidisciplinary team*

The RANZCP advocates that the final Position Paper recommend the development of time-tiered Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item numbers for clinicians to consult with carers. Formal mechanisms must be introduced to identify informal carer/carer networks and support their continual engagement with them throughout the patient’s treatment.

MBS items would improve both patient and carer wellbeing through the sharing of vital information. Carer provided patient information assists health professionals when developing person centred care plans, whilst health professionals can provide the carer with education, information and other practical supports to assist them in their role. Please see our [previous submission](#) for further information.

- *Increase income support payments through the Carer’s Payment.*

Older Australians and their carers, especially those with mental illness, are at a significant financial disadvantage compared to the general population. Difficulties in obtaining and keeping a job while providing or undergoing care inhibit the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle (adequate housing, food, health care and medical services). Increasing the Carer’s Payment would support informal carers and the older Australians they care for overcome these cost barriers.

The RANZCP thanks the Productivity Commission for the opportunity to provide further feedback and offers our ongoing support to the development of the final Position Paper.

If you have any queries, please contact Nicola Wright, Executive Manager, Policy, Practice and Research Department on (03) 9640 0646.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Vinay Lakra  
**President**

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