

Response to the Productivity Commission Draft Report.

Caring for Older Australians. January 2011

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Draft Recommendation 11.1

The recommendation to develop Carer Support Centres that will provide a broad range of carer support services is commended.

Response

Whilst the report acknowledges that many carers may have poor health partly as a result of their caring activities, there is no direction in how the Carer Support Centres will support the well being of carers and promote their wellness (pg LIII). Targeted health care initiatives have previously been recommended, particularly those that focus on carers' health status and the promotion of positive health behaviours (e.g. regular health care checks, health

care cards). Of importance, it is well recognised that depression is a major health problem for carers and a predictor of the early discontinuation of care for older community-living people. Therefore, there is a need to identify carers at particular risk for depression and implement services that address their particular support needs.¹

Draft Recommendation 8.1

The Productivity Commission Draft Report also acknowledges the need to assist informal carers via assessment of their capacity to maintain the caring role.

Response

However, in the Productivity Commission Draft Report it has not been made clear who will be responsible for the administration of such a Carer Assessment (pg 237). This responsibility, and the assessment process, needs to be made clear, so that 'hidden carers' do not slip through the system. It is often those carers who remain unseen and unacknowledged, and continue to provide large amounts of caregiving hours, who need support the most. These carers particularly need support to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing in order that they can continue to provide much needed care in the community.

In summary, we recommend that the report be more specific in regard:

1. The role of Carer Support Centres in maintaining carers' health and well being (Rec 11.1).
2. The Carer Assessment, particularly who will be responsible for the administration of the assessment and how it will be implemented (Rec.8.1).

References

1. Aggar C, Ronaldson S, Cameron I. Reactions to caregiving of frail, older persons predict depression. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. 2010;19:409-15.