

## **WHO CARES? SENIORS DO! – NEW RESEARCH**

New research by National Seniors Australia shows the contribution made by seniors to caring for both young and old in the community.

Older carers provide on average 38 hours a week of care to family members and friends, with some caring for others full-time.

The survey of 4,000 members of National Seniors, Australia's peak advocacy group for older Australians, raises major issues for National Carers Week.

Among the revealing findings of the survey is the extent of caring:

- 27% of respondents provided care for grandchildren or children under 12
- 22% provided care for an adult
- 6% provided care for both children AND adults
- 54% of carers of grandchildren rated their health as good or better
- But 66% of carers of adults rated their health as fair or poor

National Seniors Chief Executive, Professor John McCallum says the survey shows a worrying difference in the health between those who care for adults, compared to those who care for children.

"We have seen from that delightful series on the ABC 'Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds', how older Australians respond so well when they regularly interact with children.

"Unfortunately, we also see the toll it takes on the health of older Australians when looking after an adult or parent," he said.

The research also revealed what tasks carers typically do, with:

- 61% performing daily tasks such as cleaning, cooking and shopping
- 34% helping with cognitive or behavioural problems
- 37% assisting with complex health needs and 31% saying they assist with all of the above.

Professor McCallum says National Carers Week is a great opportunity to acknowledge the vital work carried out by both paid and unpaid carers.

"We worry more about people in residential care than about people being looked after at home and their carers where similar work is performed. They are our largest aged care workforce which is too little recognised."

The survey revealed almost half of respondents would accept more support in their role if it was offered.

They rated readily accessible respite care, more in-home assistance and better advice of social interaction with their care recipients as priorities.

“Good carers need to be valued and recognised in one of the toughest roles in the community and they need to be better supported,” Professor McCallum said.

National Carers’ Week runs until this Saturday, 19 October.

**ENDS**

**Professor John McCallum is available for comment, call 0488 047 380 to arrange an interview**