

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## Threat to home doctor services of concern to family and friend carers

“Carers Australia is very concerned about the impact on family and friend carers of some of the recommendations on urgent after hours GP services published in a recent report,” said Ara Cresswell, CEO of Carers Australia.

“Not only are family and friend carers frequently caring for someone who is seriously ill and/or disabled, but a great many are housebound. In this context, it is important to bear in mind that more than two thirds of Australia’s 856,000 primary carers spend more than 40 hours a week caring, often over 24 hour cycles. Indeed over 20 percent of these carers care for more than one person.

“The challenge of getting the person they care for, who may have a severe disability and/ or be very ill, to an over-crowded doctor’s surgery is very challenging in the best of circumstances; let alone spending hours waiting for medical attention in hospital emergency departments.

“For this group of people home doctor services are a godsend,’ said Ms Cresswell.

“Those recommendations in the preliminary MBS Medicare Taskforce report, which would restrict Medicare payments for after-hours services to GPs who are prepared to pay home visits in “urgent” situations threatens to severely curtail access to home visits currently provided by specialised after-hours services.

“The reason there is a market for these services is that a great many GPs won’t do out of hours work.

“It is also of concern that carers will fail to access timely medical services for themselves where they need to find replacement care.

“It is little wonder then that nearly all surveys of carers find that they are inclined to neglect their own health. They are less likely to do so if they can access an affordable doctor’s visit at home.”

**For media enquiries please contact Edward Allpress on (02) 6122 9921 or 0408 956 578**