**News release**

**Carers desperately need some care, new report shows**

New Zealand’s respite care system is in crisis and needs urgent attention, says a new report from the New Zealand Carers Alliance.

Prepared by the Alliance in association with Alzheimers NZ and IHC, the new report documents the significant problems facing the respite system, ‘many parts of which are broken and need fixing’.

Entitled *Respite In New Zealand: We must do better,* the report outlines eight steps government must take to address those problems, including three priority areas that require immediate action.

In the 2013 census, 430,000 New Zealanders, 10 percent of the population, identified as carers, looking after approximately 1.1 million New Zealanders living with disabilities.

The Alliance’s report estimates carers provide between seven and $17 billion dollars of unpaid care annually.

“This situation can’t be allowed to continue,” says Alliance co-chair and Alzheimers NZ chief executive, Catherine Hall.

“The statistics are extremely worrying now, but with an aging population our need for carers will grow exponentially.

“I dread to think how our society will cope if the government doesn’t heed the warnings in this report and act now to fix what is a badly broken respite care system.”

Ms Hall said there were over 630,000 New Zealanders aged 65-plus in 2013. This number will increase to 1.5 million by 2046, with 320,000 people aged 85 and over.

“Dementia will become a major issue for New Zealand in coming years. The number of New Zealanders with dementia is expected to grow rapidly – who is going to look after them and who is going to support the carers?”

The Alliance’s report urges government to act now in three priority areas:

* Have all DHBs review respite services and develop a plan to recommission them, with a priority on dementia.
* Develop a respite quality and outcomes framework.
* Establish a cross-sector stewardship and leadership group, the primary role of which is to ensure policy coherence across government.

“None of this work needs to be complex,” Ms Hall said. “It just needs to happen.”

Other actions government must take include:

* Rolling out the Ministry of Health’s I Choose model, which is set to replace the Carer Support Subsidy which equates to $9.50 per hour.
* Keeping the needs of carers and the people they care for as the focus on policy.
* Creating and implementing a respite innovation fund to support providers to prototype new respite options as part of recommissioning services.
* Monitoring and reviewing providers against a quality and outcomes framework.
* Having the cross-sector stewardship group lead the development of investment approach thinking for an effective and sustainable carers system.

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For more information contact Daniel Paul (021) 400-993.

Editors’ note: We have three carers willing to talk to media about their experiences and we can put you in touch with them if you’d like interviews.