

# Government to recognize carers



*Donna Quinn recently completed a Diploma in Aged Care and is now working at Talbarra Retirement Village.*

CARERS will be formally recognized for their role and contribution to society under legislation to be introduced to parliament next year.

The federal government says formal recognition is long overdue, and a national framework is aimed at improving the lives of Australia's 1.8 million carers.

Families and Community Services Minister Jenny Macklin said the national carer recognition framework would recognize in legislation the role played by carers.

"The government is determined to give carers the recognition and acknowledgement they have asked for - and which they so clearly deserve," She said on Monday.

The framework would include a national carers' strategy, a base for developing policy and service delivery, with the involvement of the states, territories and ministerial councils.

It will begin with the introduction of commonwealth carer recognition legislation in 2010.

Australia's carers deserved a big round of applause for their efforts, Ms Macklin said.

"It's a job where you don't knock off at five o'clock, or six or seven. No public holidays, no annual leave, no time off when you're sick," she said.

She says carers give a whole new meaning to the words 'soldiering on'.

The announcement of the legislation on Monday coincides with the beginning of Carers Week, as well as the release of a report highlighting the need for better welfare services for carers in rural and regional areas.

The Tyranny of Distance report shows carers are more likely to experience money troubles, suffer low employment and have their own health difficulties.

They have higher rates of stressful life events, such as divorce, while those in rural areas struggle to access services such as healthcare.

There were many challenges faced by government in addressing such concerns, Ms Macklin said, adding that the legislation would be a positive change.

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