

22 March 2012

Acknowledging Aboriginal carers on National Close the Gap Day

On National Close the Gap Day, Carers NSW is calling on the community to recognise the role of Aboriginal carers and the importance of caring in Aboriginal communities.

Poorer health and higher rates of disability mean that Aboriginal people are more likely to be caring than non-Aboriginal people in NSW.

Aboriginal carers provide support and care for family members and friends who have a disability, chronic condition, drug and alcohol dependency or a mental illness, and play a vital role in helping the people they care for live longer and happier lives.

CEO of Carers NSW, Elena Katrakis said National Close the Gap Day reminds us about the inequalities in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

“It must be remembered that Aboriginal carers across NSW are helping to close the gap everyday by providing support to the family members and friends they care for,” Ms Katrakis said.

According to the 2006 census there are 10,585 Aboriginal carers in NSW, representing 12.4 % of the NSW Aboriginal population. Aboriginal carers are three times more likely than non-Aboriginal carers to need assistance and support themselves due to a disability or health condition.

Aboriginal carers across Australia are four times more likely as non-Aboriginal carers to be living in a household with income of under \$315 a week.

“Caring in Aboriginal communities needs to be recognised and Aboriginal carers should be supported so they can continue to care. Initiatives to close the gap must include support for Aboriginal carers,” said Ms Katrakis.

“Many Aboriginal carers don’t access supports or services because they view caring as a natural part of community and family life. However, Aboriginal carers should not be expected to care alone, and are encouraged to access services and supports available to them.”

Aboriginal carers can telephone the Carer Line for information, referral, support and access to counselling and support by phoning 1800 242 636 (freecall except from mobile phones).

Contact: Elena Katrakis, CEO Carers NSW, 02 9280 4744.

A carer is any individual who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug and alcohol dependencies, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail.