

**Press Release**

**27<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

**Carers Nationwide Seek Fair Pay Deal in New Strategy**

**The Carers Association reports a huge reaction from members across the country seeking a fair pay deal in Ireland's first National Carers Strategy. This national reaction follows the launch of Government's current advertising campaign seeking submissions towards this Strategy.**

"While we welcome Government's request for submissions to the National Carers Strategy there are many concerns being expressed by family carers around the country, particularly in terms of financial supports", says Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association. "This strategy is a real opportunity for government to create a realistic framework of support for family Carers and a key issue expressed by carers is equitable treatment, specifically in terms of proper remuneration".

The Carers Association has long campaigned Government around issues of payments for family Carers. In their Pre-Budget Submission 2008, The Carers Association has lobbied Government to consider the following remuneration for family Carers;

- Apply the Carers Allowance means test to the carers income only
- Increase the rate of Carers Allowance to €338 per week, equal to the minimum standard working week wage
- Introduce a payment for full-time Carers, linking the levels to labour market equivalent, within a 3 year time frame
- Allow carers receive a full Carers Allowance in respect of each person they care for. The current rule only allows a maximum payment of one and a half Carers Allowance, even if a carer is caring for two or more people
- That PRSI contributions be awarded to Carers on the same basis as paid contributions

"While Government has indicated that they are ruling out a salary for carers and that they remain opposed to abolishing a means testing evaluation of entitlements, we trust the National Carers Strategy will enable Government develop a realistic framework of financial supports for family carers", says Mr. Egan. "Given that Ireland's 160,000 family Carers save the state over €2 billion per year, Government must seriously address the major shortfall in the number of family Carers receiving financial support and the amount of financial support received from the state. Otherwise, a National Carers Strategy will not deliver a fair deal for carers".

In recent discussions with Government, The Carers Association has reiterated that Ireland's first National Carers Strategy must ensure the fair assessment of the needs of family carers and provide ongoing and sustainable support that does not penalise family members for making the commitment of providing care in the home for their loved ones.

**The Carers Association is the National voluntary organisation of family carers in the home, providing support services, respite, training and information to carers throughout Ireland. The Carers Association can be contacted on the National Careline Freefone 1800 24 07 24 or see [www.carersireland.com](http://www.carersireland.com).**

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**Editorial Note:**

Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association and family Carers nationwide in a variety of caring situations are available for interview on request