

'Caring for the Carer' **Information Booklet**

The information we have prepared in this booklet is for the many people in our community who care for a family member or friend who lives at home. These people are called 'carers'.

If you are a 'carer', you probably dedicate many hours of your time to care for a loved one who may be very old and sick, have a disability, a mental illness or even the early stages of undiagnosed dementia. You may be the wife or the husband, the son or the daughter, the brother or the sister, the relative or even the friend of the person you are caring for.

Whatever your situation may be, as a carer you need to look after yourself emotionally and physically to be able to continue the caring process. Without you the person you care for may be left with many more issues to deal with and may not be able to remain in their own home. So taking care of yourself first is a major priority in the caring process of another.

This booklet aims to provide you with information to assist you in making the caring process more manageable and less isolated for yourself by providing information about emotional self-care as well as how to access practical information and services. There are also stories from other carers placed throughout the booklet which aim to support you in the caring role through shared experiences.

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1. What it means to be a carer

Sometimes becoming a carer can be a gradual process where the normal everyday duties you have been carrying out slowly become more and more physically and emotionally demanding as the person you are caring for deteriorates in health. Other carers may find themselves in the caring role overnight after an accident or medical procedure which has left their loved one with a disability and no longer able to look after themselves.

You may have begun caring for someone without realizing where it might lead and how it might impact on your own health and lifestyle. As the person slowly deteriorates, there are often no holidays or weekends to recharge, and it can become a full time role with little relief for many years. There is a lot of responsibility which can be very taxing regardless of how much we love the person.

"I feel so tired, but what can I do about it? I always have such little time and so much to do, and if I don't do it, no one else will. I never have a moment to take a breath. As soon as I sit down to read the newspaper, I feel like I'm wasting time, because there is this and that to do..." (Teresa)

"In a way I'm glad that I look after my mother like she looked after us when we were little. But of course, especially if one isn't used to working as a nurse, it's hard, very hard." (Maria)

Sometimes it is very physically tiring work, especially when the person doing it is no longer in their prime. The daily routine changes very little, every day you do the same things, and there are few opportunities to have a moment for oneself, to rest and to spend pleasant moments, perhaps in company. These situations often cause tension, irritability, exhaustion, and even a sense of guilt that is not justified.

*"It can happen that a person, elderly herself, works 24 hours a day, which means 168 hours a week. She is therefore doing the work of four people."
(Psychologist)*

2. Acknowledging Feelings

The constant demands of caring means that you will experience a range of different feelings, which surface from time to time. There are no right or wrong feelings. These feelings are a natural and normal reaction to caring. Everyone will react and feel differently at different times. It is important to listen to our feelings because they tell us when things are not going well and need our attention.

Some of the feelings that carers often talk about include:

- Feeling **overwhelmed, confused and shocked**.

"I never expected this to happen. I didn't know what had hit me." (Franca)

- Feeling **guilty** because:
 - You don't want to be a carer;
 - You believe you bear some responsibility for the disability or illness;
 - You lost your temper and said some harsh words;
 - You are embarrassed by the person you care for;
 - You are not perfect;
 - You need a break from caring; or

- You are placing the person you care for in residential care.
- Feeling **love and commitment** for caring for someone you love.

"With my mother we have always gotten along, for me to look after her is not a burden, I do it because I love her ..." (Gabriella)

- Feeling **frustration, anger and resentment** at:
 - Having to be the carer;
 - Others in the family who don't do their fair share;
 - The person being cared for;
 - Friends who don't make contact anymore;
 - Support services which don't provide enough help;
 - The loneliness and isolation; or
 - The focus always being on the person you care for.

"After my husband had woken me up for the third time, at four in the morning, having a shower (and he had already woken me at one and three), I just couldn't take it any more. I know it wasn't his fault, but I was desperate, and I started to scream and shout at him. I really felt like hitting him." (Franca)

- Feeling **afraid** about:
 - What will happen if you don't cope;
 - Picking up your life after the caring role ends;
 - What will happen if you die; or
 - Coping financially.

"At first I couldn't sleep. I would wake up at night and spend hours and hours thinking about what would happen to me and my wife if I became ill too. Now I'm resigned to the fact that our life is completely changed, but I feel like it's already over." (Pietro)

- Feeling **sadness** for:
 - Loss of a relationship – the parent, husband or wife, or friend you once knew;
 - Loss of the life you used to know and the sense of who you are;
 - Loss of the life you planned; or
 - Loss of opportunities for the person you care for.

"Just when we had decided to take life a bit easier, my husband had a heart attack and the things he did before he could no longer do ... He now spends most of the time in the wheelchair, and all beautiful things we were planning to do went up in smoke. It is sad to realise that things will never be the same again: with my husband I try not to let it show, but I feel so down." (Pina)

"...now it is me who is mothering her (my mother): I feel as if the disease has robbed me of my mother." (Laura)

Grief is the emotional pain that comes about as a result of a loss or a number of losses. It may be one of the strongest feelings experienced by carers and often causes great distress. Grief can go unrecognized because there has been no death. Recognising your grief and talking to someone about how you are feeling can help. If feelings of sadness persist for a long time, or affect your life to a great extent, contact your family doctor or community health centre.

Feelings may become overwhelming and lead you to act in ways you don't like. It may become hard to think clearly about important decisions. Just as feelings are individual so are ways of dealing with them. However, there is a way to deal with difficult feelings that many carers say is extremely helpful – talking with someone. Talking about problems can help, either to family and friends, to other carers in a support group or to a counsellor or psychologist.

Counselling in difficult times

During a consultation, you can talk about your concerns and as the counsellor is not one of the family, you can count on total confidentiality. The counsellor won't tell you what to do but can help you see things more clearly. The work of the counsellor is neither to make decisions for you, nor to console you as a friend, but to objectively discuss the situation with you, and help you understand how to get on top of things and which decisions you wish to make.

3. What is Stress?

When we use all of our physical and mental energy to deal with a difficult moment, we feel worried, nervous, tired, [and] under pressure; and if this situation continues for some time and we can't find a way out, nor a way to "recharge the batteries", we can fall prey to anxiety and discomfort; and the more we carry on, the worse we are. This mode of feeling is generally called "stress".

There are many varied situations that can cause stress. One can say that in general that we are under stress when we ask too much of our body and our mind. Even the measure of what is "too much" may vary because each of us reacts in different ways.

If you recognise yourself in any of these [the following] cases, it is important that you realise that they are normal things that happen to people under constant stress.

"You don't realise the kind of work this is until you're in the midst of it. The doing, doing, doing never ends, and never a kind word, never a thank you [word of gratitude]... He gets angry over every little thing and even speaks rudely to me. It's not just the physical tiredness; sometimes I feel so depressed that even a song on the radio makes me cry." (Silvia)

"My father is constantly ill; he needs me all the time. I can't even go out to do the grocery shopping, and to do the cleaning and cooking I have to take advantage of when he's sleeping. I can't even listen to the radio in peace! And as for going out, seeing friends, that doesn't even get a mention anymore. It's been ages since I've seen anyone... who has the time for that!" (Giulia)

"It's hard to maintain normal family routines with a disabled person at home. At first my husband and children accepted the fact that I dedicate so much time to my mother, but now they are beginning to get impatient because they are having to cope with doing so many more things, and to always having an elderly, sick person around at home." (Margherita)

Stress is a serious matter

It is very important not to underestimate stress and to learn to recognise the warning signs, so that one can take appropriate measures to alleviate it. In fact it will not disappear by itself. Therefore there's no point ignoring it, nor putting up with it in silence and waiting for it to pass. And not there are no medicines that are the only cure. Stress is something to be taken seriously. In the long term, not only can it cause physical ailments such as ulcers, back pain, [and] insomnia, but it can even cause premature death.

"People know that they can go to the doctor saying 'my head hurts, my back hurts', but they think they can't go saying 'I'm just dead tired!'. When someone comes to me complaining of headaches, or insomnia, recurrent colds, depression, this already suggests to me that they are stressed, and that the work they are doing is too onerous for them; so sometimes if I ask how things are at home, they burst into tears. No one wants to admit that they are not coping. "(General Practitioner)

Many people can exceed, without realising it, the limits of their ability to tolerate stress, physical and mental. Irritability and violent reactions are clear signs of stress. You may become angry and violent, especially when you take care of a person who has lost some mental capacity and whom you have to treat as a child, but it does not serve you to feel guilty and hope for the best. If you happen to feel like breaking something, or hitting someone, it's definitely time to do something to alleviate the stress, and, if necessary, to seek help.

"If you feel tired and under pressure, this is not good neither for yourself or for your family, nor for those you who are being assisted: in fact stress is reflected on the person who needs care, who will then withdraw into themselves in order to avoid arguments and quarrels, and the situation goes from bad to worse. "(Social Worker)

4. How to deal with stress

There are various ways to relieve stress, some very simple and effective. Each person must find what is good for themselves: in fact something that works for one may not be good for another.

"I find that a hot bath relaxes me, and even if I end up sleeping for an hour less, the sleep is better." (Tina)

"In the morning, before my wife gets up, I take a walk on the beach, at a brisk pace, the way I like it. Afterwards I feel much better. "(Nino)

"If I realise that I can't cope anymore, I go into the garden for half an hour, to care for my flowers, to feed my animals afterwards I feel much calmer!" (Ignazia)

"If I'm feeling nervous, I turn on the radio - I don't put on music, I just like to listen to people talking. That way my thoughts don't torment me any longer." (Rosa)

So to help with stress it is important to:

- Eat well to keep energized and healthy with a balanced diet of fruit and vegetables and eating at regular times.

- Exercise regularly – walking, gardening, swimming, dancing or some form of gentle exercise. This will make you feel more energetic and provide a break from your daily activities.
- Get enough rest and sleep. Tiredness and exhaustion often add to the stress of caring.
- Learning to relax by listening to pleasant music, relaxation CDs, breathing exercises, singing, taking a bath etc. which can help you sleep better.
- Talk about how you feel either to family or friends or seek professional assistance.

"You can't always just give, give, give; you must also learn to receive!" (Social Worker)

- Keep your links to family, friends and neighbours.
- Join a support group to help with the loneliness.
- Have an interest or hobby that you continue to do, like yoga or sewing or biscuit making.
- Talk to your doctor about your caring role and the demands it makes on you and have regular check-ups.

"It often happens that a person tries to do everything by themselves in taking care of another, with the result that both end up in the hospital: the carers, who get sick from overwork and stress, and those who are cared for, who cannot cope without assistance. One must first of all take care of oneself, because if the carer's health is lacking, who will do the work?" (Social Worker)

- Look after your back and knees. This may include organizing equipment which can be arranged by a referral to an Occupational Therapist at your Aged Care Assessment team.
- Laughing is very good to relieve stress.
- Imparate a dire 'no' alle richieste troppo pesanti. Una dose di salutare egoismo e' essenziale per evitare troppe pressioni: nessuno puo' continuare a fare molto a lungo un lavoro troppo gravoso.
- Take a break with respite services.
- Ask for and accept help from services, family and friends. Don't try and do it all yourself and risk becoming sick.

"I use almost all the services... the nurse comes twice a week to help with bathing, and Home Care comes every morning to help mother get up and have breakfast. When I was sick they came three times a day, even at midday and in the evening, to put mother to bed. Now I feel better and once a day is enough. Without them I would not have been able to cope. With this assistance, and with the Day Care, mum can stay with us, and we are all happy, both her and us in the family." (Angela)

5. Carer Support Groups

It can be very helpful to participate in a "support group" (gruppo di appoggio). These groups are comprised of people who are in situations similar to yours; to talk about your problems, and share your experiences with people who understand what you are going through, because they're going through it too, can give you much relief and help you feel that you are not alone. Even the exchange of information that takes place during these meetings is very important to help you do a better job for the person being cared for.

"Some of us had never been in a group before.... some knew each other, others not. Some would not speak in front of so many people. The first meeting was difficult; the second less so. In the end we found ourselves being almost like a family. For me it was a great help. A great relief. To I think that I didn't even want to go! "(Catherine)

Carer support groups can be found in various locations and are free of charge to attend. Some areas hold groups specifically for the Italian speaking population. They usually meet once a month for a couple of hours. If you need transport or respite or some other form of support to be able to attend the group then this may be possible.

To find out more about these groups you can contact:

- **Co.As.It. Italian Association of Assistance – Tel. 02 9564 0744**
- **Commonwealth Carelink and Respite Centre – Tel. 1800 059 059 ***
- **Carers NSW Careline – Tel. 1800 242 636**
- **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) – Tel. 13 14 50**

6. Taking a break

Caring for someone can be physically and emotionally exhausting, especially if it is all day every day. You need to take regular breaks from caring to help relieve the stress and exhaustion you may feel. By taking breaks you can rest or recharge your energy by doing something for yourself. Breaks may be taken in your house or away from it. They might be for a few hours, a day, overnight or longer. Sometimes family members and friends help out informally.

How to organise a break - Respite

Sometimes, however, extra support is needed such as when a longer break or specialized care is required. Also there are those who have no family here or get little help from them. This type of break is called “**respite**” and it is provided by many services and organizations which will vary according to the age and condition of the person you care for, and the area in which you live.

"Don't feel guilty about it. If you need help, ask for it. Don't let the situation get desperate." (Elena)

There are several different types of respite:

- **Respite Care in the home**

A care worker (assistant) will come to your home and take over your home duties for a few hours, so you can go out and run errands, or to have a little time to rest. The care workers, who sometimes speak Italian, will keep the sick person company. However they will not provide nursing care.

"To those who hesitate to seek the help of our services, I suggest you give it a try: it won't hurt to try, I think that you won't regret it. I've seen many people who initially said, 'No, me, my wife, my husband, I won't leave them in the hands of others, I don't trust them', and now they leave them, they are delighted and feel safe and secure." (Home Care Coordinator)

- **Respite in a Day Care Centre**

The person you are caring for spends a few pleasant hours in the company of a small group of people, giving you the chance to rest or concentrate on other commitments without worry, knowing that your loved one is in good hands. Usually the centre will arrange transport and lunch for a minimal cost. In some areas there are groups that speak Italian, and some centres specialise in caring for people suffering from [living with] dementia.

"At the Day Care Centre clients spend a different kind of morning from the usual, with enjoyable activities in the company of others, and with the excursions they have the opportunity to get out, so that sometimes they forget about their aches and pains ... In addition, Day Care gives the family a bit of respite, and the opportunity to spend those hours on their own. In this way there are fewer conflicts in the family." (Day Care Centre Coordinator)

- **Residential Respite Care**

In a residential care centre the person you are caring for spends a couple of days, or even weeks, giving you a rest. The aged care service in your area can give you information on various residential care centres. There are things to consider when choosing the residential centre:

- **Hostel:** the elderly person is quite independent and does not need constant medical care, they can go and stay in a Hostel, where they will have a room to themselves and will go into the dining room for meals, and where they can meet other guests in the public areas.
- **Nursing Home:** If there is need of medical assistance, or if the elderly person has to stay in bed, they can stay in a Nursing Home, where there is the certainty of medical care 24 hours a day. It is possible for them to go to a residential centre where a small group of residents (called Cluster Group) and some staff speak Italian.
- **Hospital:** Some hospitals reserve places for elderly patients. If you require an interpreter, one will be called upon admission, so that the nurses and doctors can be fully informed about the health condition of the elderly person. Medical assistance is available 24 hours a day and will be given by the hospital doctors.

It is important not to wait until you are feeling stressed before you arrange a break. Regular breaks are an important part of any stress management program, and can help the person you care for get used to a routine of respite. Most services have waiting lists so try to plan your respite well in advance.

"There are eight of us children, but some live far away, others have their own problems ... only Day Care has helped me. I take my mother there at ten and I go and get her at three, this way I get to have some relaxation time too. Otherwise I would have already become exhausted, or I would have had to take my mother to nursing home." (Anna)

What about the person I care for?

Many people being cared for look forward to a break as much as their carers do. A new face, new conversations, new activities and a change of scenery are often very welcome. Sometimes the person you care for may be reluctant to agree to cooperate with your need

for a break. They may feel angry or confused about your need for a break and be anxious about what it means for them. With time, appropriate arrangements can usually be made.

What is the cost of respite?

The cost of respite depends on your needs. Some services may be free while others may charge a small fee or charge according to your income. Residential respite usually charges a standard fee. Private services may be expensive.

Where to get more information:

- **Co.As.It. Italian Association of Assistance – Tel. 02 9564 0744**
- **Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre – Tel. 1800 052 222:** can let you know what respite options are available for you and the person you care for. *
- **Carers NSW Careline – Tel. 1800 242 636:** provides specialist carer information and advice; emotional support; counseling programs; education and training programs; a carer support kit in Italian.
- **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) – Tel. 13 14 50:** can help if you find English difficult as they will interpret with the organization for you in Italian while you are on the telephone.

Acknowledgements: The above sections have been adapted from “Information for carers” Kit, Sections – *Feelings and emotions, Taking care of yourself, Respite Care*, published in English and Italian by Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre; “Caring for the Carer” – published by Co.As.It. 1995; and also “Information for caregivers” Kit, 1 – *Carers NSW*, 2 – *The seven rules of highly effective carers*, and 3 – *Support groups for carers*, published in English and Italian by Carers NSW.

7. Loss of Identity, guilt and grief when the person you care for goes into residential care

It is common for carers to experience many different feelings when the person they care for goes into residential care. It is important to realise that all these feelings are completely normal and many carers feel the same way. The common feelings expressed by many carers include:

- **Guilt :**
 - because he never wanted to go to a nursing home
 - because I could not do it anymore
 - because some days she is better and I wonder if she could have stayed at home
 - because I promised my mother I would look after dad like I did with her
 - cause we could not care for her any more at home
- **Sadness**
 - because he was leaving home for good
 - because I didn't want him to go there
 - because you see your loved one in such conditions
- **Loneliness**
 - because you miss the person you were so close to, your life companion

- because the person you love has changed personality and doesn't recognize you any more
- because there is an emptiness in the house
- **Anxiety:**
 - wondering if we were doing the right thing to our family?
 - because we did not know how my mother would react
 - when he was asking me to bring him home
- **Relief:**
 - because we just couldn't look after him 24 hours a day anymore
 - because they give him better care in the home
 - because at home on her own, my mother would constantly fall and break bones
- *Also – **Anger, helplessness, stress, emptiness and a loss of identity***

The sense of emptiness or loss of identity felt by carers when the person they were caring for enters residential care is very natural. This is often due to the fact that in the past you directed all your daily activities and thoughts towards caring for that person, and once that person has gone, you may struggle to find a sense of purpose. It may feel as though you are no longer useful or valued in your caring role.

Guilt is a very common emotion experienced by carers. Guilt may arise from the belief that you have failed the person you have been caring for. What can make this worse is that every now and then you may also feel relieved from the ongoing demands of caring now that you no longer shoulder the whole load and this can make you feel even more guilty and perhaps even angry and ashamed of yourself. This creates a cycle of guilt which serves no one so it is important to talk to others about these feelings so they do not create more internal stress for you.

An unnecessary burden: “What will ‘people’ say?”

This is a big part of the Italian culture which needs to be mentioned as it places more stress on the carer as they deal with an already difficult situation. It is important for the carer and their family, with the professional advice of doctors and Aged Care specialists to make decisions right for their family circumstances and for them not to take on board what other people may think or say.

“The hardest thing to face...is the community attitude... I must say we too used to criticize...Comments like: ‘Look at that fellow he abandoned his father in that place.’ That is the criticism that goes on being leveled at you.... But it is not abandoning them, it is more about caring for them...In the case of my mother it would have been ‘abandoning’ to leave them in the situation they were in because she just could not go on. I didn’t know even half the problems confronting her till years afterwards...She never talked about it... (son)

Acknowledgement: This section has been adapted from the Partners in Residential Care Project (Italian Project): Part 1 *Accepting Residential Care* – ‘A difficult transition’ (Final draft – August 05) and also from *L’impatto del trasferimento ad una struttura socio-assistenziale a carattere residenziale* No. 4 Una scheda informativa per addetti all’assistenza – Carers NSW Australia – 1800 242 636.

It is important to mention that the above feelings are also relevant for when the person you are caring for dies. There can be the same feelings of grief and loss as discussed above and the main thing to remember is that these feelings are normal and talking to family, friends and professionals such as a counselor can help. More information about the grieving process can be found in Migrant Grief, the Italian experience in Australia which is available from **Co.As.It. Sydney Tel: 02 9564 0744**.

8. Practical Help

Your local Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre has much more information available on a wide range of topics in Italian. Call the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre (Carers NSW) on **1800 242 636** (free call except from a mobile phone) and ask to speak to one of the operators of the centre.

Or you can call **Co.As.It.** on **9564 0744** for more information.

Information in Italian is also available online on the **Co.As.It. aged care website** www.coasitagedcare.org.au.

There are many services available to assist you in caring for your loved one. Please find below a list of organisations and contact details.

Here is what some people have said about accessing services:

"I was afraid of doing something wrong when I helped my husband... the care workers not only helped me, but also taught me many things that I did not know how to do, such as washing a person who cannot get out of bed."(Luisa)

"The hospital doctor insisted that I get help, otherwise he would not allow me to take my husband home. Now I know that he was right! "(Rita)

"It wasn't easy to explain to my parents that I couldn't do it alone, and that, occasionally, I needed someone to substitute for me in looking after them. They didn't like the idea of having strangers in the house, they felt uncomfortable with people they didn't know because they didn't speak English. The Co.As.It. staff helped me in this respect and from that moment on everything became easier, because my parents felt more comfortable speaking Italian and they accepted the help of the services." (Lidia)

"The help that the doctor can give you is not only for the patient but also for the family. If the patient suffers from a serious illness, the family is also in a sense sick, because the family cares, and has to take responsibility for caring for the patient at home. The doctor's role is first of all to give his support to the family and explain to them about the disease they are dealing with, and its likely trajectory, and what could happen within a few years." (General Practitioner)

"I no longer understood my mother, I was a nervous wreck. I thought she was well, and that she could think straight, and I used to cry.... they made me realise that it was the disease, that the poor thing didn't do it on purpose, it wasn't her fault." (Matilda)

"The occupational therapist has helped me so much, to find the right chair, the electric chair for climbing stairs, and many other things...." (Gino)

Also please see information below about "My Aged Care" which is now the main contact point for all aged care services.

9. List of organisations

- **Co.As.It. Italian Association of Assistance – Tel: 02 9564 0744;**
www.coasit.org.au; www.coasitagedcare.org.au
- **Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Respite Centre – Tel: 1800 059 059; 1800 052 222;** <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/advice/services-supports/respite-carer-support> (for information on a range of community services and aged care services)
- **Carers NSW Careline – Tel: 1800 242 636;** www.carersnsw.asn.au;
<https://www.carersnsw.org.au/advice/services-supports/respite-carer-support>
- **My Aged Care – Commonwealth Department for Social Services - information on all aged and community care services – Tel: 1800 200 422;**
www.myagedcare.gov.au
- **Centrelink – Commonwealth Department of Human Services – Tel: 1800 227 475;** www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/centrelink (information on aged care fees and services)
- **Dementia Helpline (Alheimers Australia) – Tel: 1800 100 500;**
<https://fightdementia.org.au/support-and-services/services-and-programs-we-provide/national-dementia-helpline>
- **Continence Helpline – Tel: 1800 330 066;** www.continence.org.au
- **Respite for carers program – My Aged Care – Tel: 1800 200 422**
www.myagedcare.gov.au/aged-care-services/national-respite-carers-program
- **Australian Tax Office (ATO) Personal Infoline – Tel: 13 28 61;**
<https://www.ato.gov.au/About-ATO/About-us/Contact-us/Phone-us/> (to resolve any tax problems)
- **Australian Tax Office (ATO) Complaints Line – Tel: 13 28 70;**
<https://www.ato.gov.au/About-ATO/About-us/Contact-us/Complaints,-compliments-and-suggestions/Complaints/>
- **Medicare – Commonwealth Department of Human Services – Tel: 13 20 11;**
<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/medicare>
- **Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) – Tel: 1800 020 613;**
<http://www.pbs.gov.au/pbs/home>

- **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) – Tel: 13 14 50;**
<https://www.tisnational.gov.au/>

*** Postscript 30/6/2015:**

- **Changes to the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Program**

The Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centres (CRCC) will continue to be funded for provision of the Carer Respite & Support services until 30 June 2017.

The CRCCs will continue to provide information about respite options and other support services in their local areas; provide a link to those services and assist carers to access short-term and emergency respite support.

The phone number to access the CRCC remains the same: 1800 052 222 and 1800 059 059, and so does the name Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centre. The CRCCs are still able to transfer calls to other centres nationally.

<https://www.carersnsw.org.au/advice/services-supports/respite-carer-support>

- **National Respite for Carers Program – Information Brochure**

[http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/sites/default/files/FS5 National Respite for Carers Program Italian December 2014.pdf](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/sites/default/files/FS5_National_Respite_for_Carers_Program_Italian_December_2014.pdf)

- **My Aged Care – Information in Italian**

<http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/about-us-italian>

Information about 'My Aged Care'

The My Aged Care website has been established by the Australian Government to help you navigate the aged care system. The Gateway is part of the Australian Government's changes to the aged care system which have been designed to give people more choice, more control and easier access to a full range of aged care services.

You can find more information about these and other improvements to Australia's aged care system below, as well as information about the aged care workforce and a glossary of definitions that may help you to understand any unfamiliar terms that you come across while finding out more about aged care.

My Aged Care is made up of this website and a national contact centre. Together they can provide you with information on aged care, whether for yourself, a family member, friend or someone you're caring for. The contact centre can be phoned on 1800 200 422 between 8.00am and 8.00pm on weekdays and between 10.00am and 2.00pm on Saturdays. The My Aged Care phone line is closed on Sundays and national public holidays.

You can expect our staff to be polite, helpful and knowledgeable and to provide:

- prompt, reliable and confidential services
- clear information, which can be made available:
 - in other languages if you speak another language
 - in other formats if you have hearing difficulties or a vision impairment
- help to find Government-funded aged care services
- prompt resolution of any complaint or concern you have with My Aged Care.

Need an interpreter?

If you speak a language other than English you can phone the Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) on 131 450. TIS covers more than 100 languages and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for the cost of a local call. Alternatively, you can call the National Contact Centre on 1800 200 422 (between 8am and 8pm on weekdays or 10am and 2pm on Saturdays), and we will organise an interpreter through TIS to support the contact centre in communicating with you.

My Aged Care also includes information on aged care in other languages.

<http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/about-us>

Last accessed June 2015