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Joint Media Release

Chris Bowen MP
Minister for Human Services
Minister for Financial Services, Superannuation and Corporate Law

Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

4 September 2009

Carers of children with disability encouraged to seek financial support

The Australian Government is urging parents and carers of children with severe disability to apply to Centrelink to test their eligibility for income support.

Major reforms were introduced in July 2009 to eligibility criteria for Carer Payment (child), which provides income support to parents and carers who, because of the demands of their caring role, can't support themselves.

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, and the Minister for Human Services, Chris Bowen, said that under special implementation arrangements, parents or carers who apply before the end of September can have their payment backdated to 1 July 2009.

“The new, fairer assessment process for Carer Payment (child) replaced the previous, highly restrictive eligibility criteria,” Ms Macklin said.

“This is expected to help an extra 19,000 parents and carers of children aged under 16 and with severe disability or severe medical condition to become eligible for the payment.”

Mr Bowen said the Carer Payment (child) was a vital support for parents who are unable to work due to the demands of their caring role.

“Any parent can empathise with those who find themselves in the role of having to provide constant,

demanding care for a child with severe disability or medical condition,” Mr Bowen said.

“It is only right and proper that we recognise the vital and important role these parents and carers play in our community and we urge anyone in this situation who is not currently receiving Carer payment (child) to contact Centrelink to test their eligibility.”

As well as broadening the eligibility criteria, the July changes also:

- Increase the range of medical professionals who can complete medical forms;
- Give parents and carers access to the Carer Payment for short-term care periods of at least three months, but less than six months (previously care had to be provided for at least six months to qualify);
- Provide more sensitive and generous arrangements for parents and carers of children with a terminal condition or those with a child in hospital; and
- Enable automatic qualification for Carer Allowance, based on qualification for Carer payment.

The recipients of the Carer Payment would also benefit from upcoming increases to pension payments.

“Recipients of Carer Payment, along with those receiving Disability Support Pension and Age Pension and some other payments, will receive increases in their payments of \$32.49 per week for singles on the full rate and \$10.14 per week combined for couples on the full rate, under the Rudd Government’s pension reforms which take effect on 20 September 2009,” Ms Macklin said.

For further information please contact Centrelink on 13 2717 or www.centrelink.gov.au

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