

## REPORT | Lack of support causing poor health

# Stress puts some carers on sicklist

TORY SHEPHERD  
HEALTH REPORTER

SOUTH Australian carers are at risk of "becoming patients themselves" because of the pressures of the job, a study to be released today shows.

The Health Department report into the wellbeing of carers found they were about 70 per cent more likely to develop chronic conditions such as diabetes, arthritis and cardiovascular disease than non-carers.

Carers SA chief executive officer

Rosemary Warmington blamed the poor health of carers on a lack of support. "The lack of adequate assistance for carers means they are at risk of becoming a patient themselves," she said.

"We don't want to have two patients because of a lack of action. The establishment of a formalised clinical health assessment of carers, among other initiatives, would help carers to address their own health needs."

The report found four in 10 carers had a chronic condition,

and two in 10 had two chronic conditions. Phil Hefferan, 57, of Seacliff, cared for his mother until she died a couple of years ago.

He said the stress and anxiety of caring affected his own health.

"I think the stress of caring is probably the most difficult part," he said. "Especially in fairly elderly people, when they are in a very sick stage of their life, you never know what's going to happen."

"I lost weight, because I didn't eat well. You become more focused on the person you're caring for than on yourself."



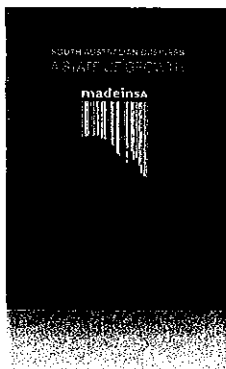
**SUFFERING:** Seacliff man Phil Hefferan cared for his mother until she died a couple of years ago.

## Outcry as disability funding slashed



**NOT HAPPY:** Kirsty Reynolds and other children are upset over funding cuts to the Sports Ability program.

Picture: LECHELLE EARL



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TORY SHEPHERD

KIRSTY Reynolds is one of hundreds suffering because the State Government has slashed funding for disability groups.

The nine-year-old Mt Gambier girl has a development disorder that stops her playing team sports.

But she has been able to learn games and social skills through a program called Sports Ability.

Sports Ability, run by Anglican Community Care, was one of a range of programs affected when the State Government cut more than half a million dollars in funding from 10 disability advocacy agencies last year.

Other organisations who lost funding include Brain Injury Network SA, Family Advocacy and the Down Syndrome Society of SA.

Kirsty said Sports Ability had helped her make friends and have fun. "It should keep going because it's great fun and it's good for other people who can't do some things," she said.

Her mother Erica Reynolds said the program had helped Kirsty interact with other people, and she

did not know where else Kirsty could get a similar service.

ACC acting chief executive officer Ute Herrmann-Bullock said the program was the only one of its kind in the South-East.

Other organisations who lost funding say people are falling between the cracks because Disability SA cannot cater for them.

Family Advocacy executive officer Cynthia Betterman said up to 80 families would miss out on help.

"We have families coming to us totally confused and feeling as if the situation is hopeless," she said.

"They can't get anywhere with Disability SA. They are really frustrated so they come to us but our support is rationed now as well."

BINSA executive officer Dawn Brooks said they were "cut to the bare bones".

Disability Minister Jay Weatherill said the Government had had to prioritise funding.

"These are very good services who do a good job but what we've done is prioritise our resources to fund frontline services," he said.