

With the greatest of care

A LOCAL carers group has launched a project which aims to deliver a vivid snapshot of their lives to key decision-makers in the disability sector.

Organisers say their book of carer stories will allow others to step briefly into their world and to consider their reality. They hope the book will be an effective tool for raising awareness about the difficulties carers encounter.

Around 20 carer profiles have been collated to date by members of the Port Macquarie Carers Group. Each contains images and a brief outline of who they care for and why, as well as each carer's experience with or access to support services.

The group hopes other carers in the Port Macquarie area will take up their invitation to share their stories.

"The project is not about our little group," said Jan Dennis, one of the project volunteers.

"We welcome the involvement of all carers in the Greater Port Macquarie area," she added.

Port Macquarie MP Leslie Williams recently took part in the launch of the project and congratulated the group for their tenacity and courage.

"As someone who has been a carer for my brother and with aging parents who are his full time carers, I understand the challenges facing carers every day," Mrs Williams said.



Well done: Member for Port Macquarie Leslie Williams, congratulates Port Macquarie Carer Group coordinator Dawn Davies and project volunteer Erica Lake at the launch of their carer profile book project.

"The dedication and commitment of carers deserves to be acknowledged. They play such an important role not only in the lives of individuals but also throughout our community."

The timing of the project is especially important as details of the national disability insurance scheme evolve.

According to Port Macquarie Carers Group coordinator Dawn

Davies, carers often feel ignored or misunderstood. Like others to have penned their stories for the project, Dawn found the process to be both difficult and cathartic.

"When I sat down to put pen to paper, there were just so many things that needed to be said, it was hard to narrow it down," Dawn said.

"So many situations and hardships Jay and I have faced are relevant, but you can't include them all."

Volunteer Erica Lake is helping to facilitate the project. She has spent many hours assisting carers to put their experiences into written words.

Erica has been both inspired and disturbed by the stories of remarkable resilience, devoted love, isolation, frustration and anguish that have arisen from the project.

"I feel honoured to have met so many wonderful people, who have shared their personal journeys with me," Erica said. "We rarely stop to consider the challenges carers face in everyday life."

In a poignant conclusion to each profile, the carers have shared their plans for the future, outlining their individual hopes and fears.

"The responses show just how many carers fear what the future may hold," Dawn said.

Likewise the carer wish list that has emerged follows a number of common themes, including the need for relief from isolation and from the constant responsibility and worry of caring. Having read the first dozen or so carer profiles, Leslie Williams has encouraged the project volunteers to continue.

"Congratulations to those bringing this project to fruition and I look forward to reading more of your personal stories," Mrs Williams said.

Inclusion in the project is open to

Port Macquarie Carers Group:

It is made up of people from all walks of life who care for someone with a disability.

Members offer care and support to each, exchange information, plus share practical information, tips and resources.

The group meets at 10am on the 2nd Thursday of the month, usually at the Port Macquarie Neighbourhood Centre in Muston St, Port Macquarie. Meetings often feature a guest speaker and always include a delicious morning tea. Membership is free.

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all carers in the Greater Port Macquarie area, although submissions must be received by March 31, 2014. Anyone interested in the project is welcome to contact Dawn Davies by phoning 6581 2348 or by email dawn@acesincorporated.org. An information pack and template outlining the types of information to be included is available to guide those taking part.

page 12, Port Macquarie News - 22/11/13