



Pre-Budget Submission 2018/19

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AN AUSTRALIA THAT VALUES AND SUPPORTS ALL CARERS

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ABOUT CARERS WA

Carers WA is the peak body representing the needs and interests of carers in Western Australia and is part of a national network of Carers Associations. Carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have disability, mental illness, a chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail aged. The person they care for may be a parent, partner, sibling, child, relative, friend or neighbour. Illness and disability are non-discriminatory and the caring role can be borne by any individual at any given time, regardless of socio-economic status, age or location. Caring is a significant form of unpaid work in the community and is integral to the maintenance of our aged, disability, health, mental health, and palliative care systems. A report undertaken by Deloitte, Access Economics, 'The economic value of unpaid care in Australia in 2015', determined the replacement value of the care undertaken by carers in Australia to cost \$60.3 billion per annum.

Some important facts about carers include:

- There are 2.7 million unpaid carers in Australia. More than 856,000 carers are primary carers.
- There are more than 320,000 family and friends in a caring role in Western Australia or approximately 1 in 8 in the community.

ENQUIRIES

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Introduction and background

Caring is a significant form of unpaid work in the community and is integral to the maintenance of our disability, health, mental health, aged and palliative care systems. A report undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics determined the replacement value of the care undertaken by carers in Australia to cost \$60.3 billion per annum¹. Providing supports to carers is an effective means to reduce the financial costs to the Government and taxpayers as well as the social costs to the wider community.

Key demographic trends point to a significant increase in the demand for carers in the coming years. With advances in healthcare people are living longer including those with frailty, chronic illness or disability. 15% of Australians (3.7 million) were aged 65 and over in 2016, this is expected to grow to 22% (8.7 million) by 2056.² The number of people of working age in proportion to the total population is decreasing, with predictions of a decrease from 67% in 2013 to 60% in 2061.³ The economic and social sustainability of this expected increase in the demand for carers will depend upon the ability of carers to combine work and care and to enter or re-engage with the workforce when their caring role ceases or is reduced.

It is necessary to provide appropriate and flexible supports to assist carers during the course of their caring role, whilst also meeting their needs if and when their role reduces or ceases. In this period of fiscal restraint, the recommendations put forward in the submission regarding support for carers, are intended to result in overall budget savings.

¹ *The economic value of informal care in Australia in 2015*, Access Economics. 2015. Deloitte Access Economics and Carers Australia, Canberra, June 2015.

² *Older Australians at a Glance*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, April 2017, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-people/older-australia-at-a-glance/contents/summary>

³ *3222.0 Population Projections, Australia, 2012 (base) to 2101*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013, [http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3222.0main+features52012%20\(base\)%20to%202101](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3222.0main+features52012%20(base)%20to%202101)

Executive Summary

In 2016 the Western Australian government launched the WA Carer Strategy. This strategy developed in partnership with the Carers Advisory Council and Carers WA outlines a vision and outcomes for carers in WA and a series of strategies to achieve these. It represents the next step towards greater community recognition of and support for Western Australian carers and builds on the foundations laid by the Carers Recognition Act 2004, the WA Carers Charter and other supportive legislation and policies.

Carers WA have identified four key priority areas that would significantly support carers in Western Australia. These priority areas are linked to current gaps in the full implementation of the WA Carers Strategy.

The four key priority areas identified are:

1. A review of the Carers Recognition Act 2004 – Strategy 2.3
2. Implementation of a Volunteer Carer Peer Program – Strategy 3.1
3. Expansion of the Carers in Employment – Be Job Ready program – Strategy 4.2 and 4.3
4. Increased Education and Training for Carers – Strategy 3.4

The WA Carers Strategy

The WA Carers Strategy was prepared following significant consultation with the community, public and not-for-profit sector. It is intended to be a blueprint for carer recognition and support. It is designed to guide the actions of the whole community and focus efforts on better recognition of, and support for, carers. The strategy is intended to apply to all government agencies working with carers and people who require support. The strategy is also appropriate for use by private, not-for-profit and non-government organisations that work with carers.

Carers WA recognises some gaps in the implementation of the WA Carers Strategy and the four key priority areas in this submission address these gaps.

Priority 1 Review of the Carers Recognition Act

Strategy 2.3 in the WA Carers Strategy aims to “facilitate the inclusion of carers and carers’ needs in planning and decision making across all levels of government”.

The Carers Recognition Act was enacted by the Western Australian Parliament in 2004. The current Act applies specifically to health and disability. As stipulated the Act was reviewed three years after its commencement, in 2008. Carers WA advocates for a further review of the Act to explore its application to a far wider range of government agencies relevant to the needs of carers including education, training, employment, housing, regional development and local government. Expansion of the Act was, in fact, one of the original recommendations

arising from the 2008 review but this was not pursued as the timing of the review coincided with a change of State Government.

Recommendation 1: THAT the State Government initiate a review of the Carers Recognition Act 2004 to widen its application across the broader community.

Priority 2 Implementation of a Volunteer Carer Peer Program

Strategy 2.1 in the WA Carers Strategy aims to “Ensure carers can easily access information, advice and support”.

In 2016 Carers WA was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to develop a Volunteer Carer Peer Program. Through Carers WA research and work with carers and service providers, the increasing value of peer support to a carer’s ability to manage their caring role has been recognised. The second part of this project, which was not funded at the time, was to implement a program of carer peer support.

Feedback received about the workbook and facilitators guide was positive and it is necessary to implement the full program. This would involve a not-for-profit organisation training carers with lived experience (including disability, chronic illness, mental illness and frail aged) to become Carer Volunteer Peer Mentors. A Coordinator would match trained Carer Volunteers with carers requiring support to work together to improve the carers wellbeing. This model is supported by best practice as it provides individualised, peer led support.

In addition, Carer Peer Support Workers would be employed to assist carers with more acute issues requiring a higher level of support. These carer peers would receive additional training and support from the not-for-profit organisation. In addition to the direct support to carers, this role will closely with current systemic advocacy roles to improve service responsiveness to family/carer needs and facilitate peer led workshops.

Recommendation 2: THAT the Department of Communities fund the implementation of the Volunteer Carer Peer Program. It is estimated this program would require between \$250,000 and \$300,000.

Priority 3 Expansion of the Carers in Employment – Be Job Ready Program

Strategy 4.2 in the WA Carers Strategy aims to “Support carers to return to or remain in employment”.

Only 53.6 per cent of primary carers aged 15–64 years in Australia are employed, compared to 80.3 per cent of non-carers.⁴ Data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey shows that approximately 3–4 per cent of Australian employees become carers each year,⁵ and that the probability of a new carer leaving the labour force is 8 per cent. In addition, 26.7 per cent of primary carers have had to reduce work hours since becoming a carer.

It can be difficult to combine work and the caring role but many carers would like to maintain both. Returning to the workforce and gaining the flexible arrangements needed to combine work and care are challenging. Carers are often isolated, unsure of their own abilities after a break from the workforce and experience difficulties in finding work which fits with their caring role.

To address these barriers the Carers in Employment - – Be Job Ready Program was implemented by Carers WA from April 2017 to support carers to return to work. A 12-week course is delivered in partnership with the ORS Group (Disability Employment Service). The course is held for 2 hours a week to support carers in becoming job ready. The aim is to build the confidence and skills to enable participants to be ready to apply for work. This program is proving to be successful and Carers WA has received considerable interest from carers wishing to participate. The program is funded by the Department of Communities. The current funding allows for two courses to be delivered per year, delivering the program to 20 participants. There is an unmet need for the program going forward.

An extension of the program to cater for 100 participants per year would meet this unmet need. The savings to the government in welfare payments, and the additional tax contribution made by employed carers are considerable. The cost of this program is easily outweighed by the financial benefit even if only a modest number of carers find employment.

Recommendation 3: THAT the Department of Communities fund the expansion of the Carers in Employment - Be Job Ready Program. It is estimated this program would require between \$150,000 and \$200,000.

⁴ 4430.0 Survey of Ageing Disability and Carers 2015, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2016.

⁵ Hill, T Thomson, C Bittman, M & Griffiths, M 2008, *What kinds of jobs help carers combine care and employment?* Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Family Matters*, No.80, p.27

Priority 4 Education and Training for Carers

Strategy 2.1 in the WA Carers Strategy aims to “Ensure carers can easily access information, advice and support”.

Increased training for carers in Advanced Care Planning and end of life issues would reduce unnecessary treatment provided by the health system at the end of life.

Advance Care Planning (ACP) is an ongoing discussion between a person, their loved ones and their health care professionals. It involves learning about the different choices available and choosing the type of medical care that is best for them. The components of an advance care plan are:

- Advance Health Directive - Legally record your decisions for future health care treatments and procedures in an *Advance Health Directive*.
- Enduring Power of Guardianship - In Western Australia, a substitute decision-maker is referred to as an enduring guardian.
- Advance Care Plan - A person can record additional personal wishes not covered in the *Advance Care Directive* or *Enduring Power of Guardianship* in a separate form called an *Advance Care Plan*.

Enhanced carer knowledge and assistance available to carers to understand Advanced Care Planning would help develop a more sustainable health system.

Recommendation 4: THAT funding is provided to develop and deliver training for carers in Advanced Care Planning and end-of-life planning. It is estimated this program would require between \$90,000 and \$120,000.