



Summary of feedback to the Mental Health  
Promotion, Mental Illness and Alcohol and  
Other Drug prevention plan 2018-2025  
Consultation Draft

January 2018

AN AUSTRALIA THAT VALUES AND SUPPORTS ALL CARERS

P: 1300 227 377 W: [www.carerswa.asn.au](http://www.carerswa.asn.au) E: [policy@carerswa.asn.au](mailto:policy@carerswa.asn.au)

## 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 socioeconomic 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.
- An estimated 61,000 people in WA reported providing ongoing care for a family member or friend with whom they co-resided and who needed assistance due to a 'mental or behavioural disorder'<sup>1</sup>.

## ENQUIRIES

Felicity Mitchell

Policy and Engagement Officer

Carers WA

182 Lord Street

PERTH WA 60000

Phone: 1300 227 377

Email: [felicity.mitchell@carerswa.asn.au](mailto:felicity.mitchell@carerswa.asn.au)

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<sup>1</sup> Carers Australia WA, "Caring in Focus: Caring for a family member or friend with mental health issues", January 2017, <https://www.carerswa.asn.au/publications/caring-in-focus/>, p. 4.

## General Comments

Almost half of the adult population (45.5 per cent) experiences a mental health disorder at some point in their lifetime, which makes caring a common and important role.<sup>2</sup> As noted in the plan, often mental health issues co-occur with alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues. Social and emotional support from family and carers plays a role in protecting against mental illness and AOD use in the community and the prevention plan should note that role.<sup>3</sup>

Carers WA supports the goals and principles articulated in the plan and is supportive of the plans intent to involve carers in its development and implementation.

Carers WA notes that carers are named as a target priority group in the strategies around “expanding existing interventions that promote social inclusion and reduce stigma associated with mental illness and/or AOD use problems (page 32). The strategy to “involve consumers, families, carers and community members in the development and implementation of prevention activities” (page 33) is seen as very important to strengthening communities. Further focus could be given to carers within this action domain by including a strategy around the liaison between organisations supporting carers and other AOD service providers to work together in health promotion and provision of support to families experiencing mental health and/or AOD issues.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p 5.

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, E., Rodgers, B. and Butterworth, P., “Family relationships and mental illness impacts and service responses”, AFRC Issues, Number 4, 2008, p. 6.