

The Hon. Mark McGowan, MLA  
Premier; Minister for Public Sector Management;  
State Development, Jobs and Trade; Federal-State Relations  
5th Floor, Dumas House  
2 Havelock Street  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Premier

### **Speaking up for WA Carers: State Election 2021**

In the lead up to the state election in March, Carers WA would like to give you the opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to supporting the estimated 230,000 family and friend carers in 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. 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.

Carers WA in consultation with our membership, has identified two specific priorities for carers in Western Australia in the lead up to the State election.

#### **Priority 1: Promotion of carer recognition**

Despite the introduction of the Carers Recognition Act in 2004, WA carers feel that they are not well recognised by the community or the government. Only 18.1% of carers agreed or strongly agreed that the government recognised their caring role and 20.2% of carers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “*I feel my caring role is recognised and valued by my community*”.<sup>1</sup>

A review of the Carers Recognition Act 2004 began in 2018 with carers and the community consulted about the impact of the Act and changes required to improve carer recognition. A report to the Minister was originally due by the end of 2018. This report is yet to be completed. **Carers are disappointed in the progress made by the current government on this review.**

***Will you commit to promptly completing the review of the Carers Recognition Act 2004 and be supportive of changes which enhance the rights and recognition of carers?***

---

<sup>1</sup> Briefing paper: A summary of findings from the 2020 National Carer Survey, Carers WA, November 2020. Available online at [https://www.carerswa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Summary-of-findings-2020-National-Carers-Survey\\_November2020.pdf](https://www.carerswa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Summary-of-findings-2020-National-Carers-Survey_November2020.pdf)

**Priority 2: Provision of adequate social connection, resilience building and respite facilities to allow carers to maintain their important role**

In the recent 2020 National Carer Survey, WA carers reported higher levels of social isolation than their national counterparts, with 39.7% of respondents reporting as highly socially isolated and 25% reporting low levels of social support. These results explain the higher levels of psychological distress experienced WA carers. 53.1% of WA carers report high or very high levels of psychological distress. In addition, one in three respondents never get time out from their caring responsibilities and half of respondents reported not having enough time to keep on top of other responsibilities.

The lack of time out from the caring role has been exacerbated for carers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many services have been disrupted and the requirement for vulnerable people to isolate has resulted in increased caring duties for unpaid carers as well as further social isolation.

**Therefore, it is vital that the state government support the resilience of those in an unpaid caring role by funding appropriate facilities.**

Carers WA proposes that the State Government provides capital and recurrent revenue funding for carer facilities in selected regional centres to provide a base for respite, social connection, education and wellbeing activities. The proposed facilities are aimed at building the resilience of carers, minimising carer-fatigue and supporting quality informal care in the community.

***Will you commit to funding carer respite facilities in WA to allow carers to continue in their important roles?***

Further information on these priorities is provided in the enclosed fact sheet. We would appreciate your response regarding what you and /or your party will commit to in relation to the two priorities listed above. Carers WA has established an election webpage as the platform to inform our members of the commitment from political parties. The webpage can be found at [carerswa.asn.au/speakingupforcarers](http://carerswa.asn.au/speakingupforcarers).

Carers WA is writing to a number of politicians to ask what their election commitments are for carers. We will publish any responses we receive. To ensure timely information to our members before they head to the polls, please send your response to Carers WA by **Friday 19 February 2021**. You may also email responses to [policy@carerswa.asn.au](mailto:policy@carerswa.asn.au).

Yours sincerely



Paul Coates  
Chief Executive Officer

18 January 2021