

# Carers WA 2024-25 Policy Priorities



## Who is a carer?

A carer is a person who provides care and assistance to a person with disability, a chronic illness, mental health challenges, alcohol or drug dependency or who requires assistance with everyday tasks due to frailty.<sup>3</sup>

This care is unpaid and does not form part of a volunteer or work arrangement.<sup>4</sup>

The care which carers provide is valued at **\$77.9 billion** per year and amounts to **2.2 billion** hours of unpaid care per year. This invaluable care supports WA's already strained health system, and assists many people to retain their independence at home, outside of services such as residential aged care.

While the demand for informal carers is projected to increase **23%** by 2030, the number of informal carers is only expected to increase by **16%** over this timeframe.

This represents a total shortfall by 2030 of:



**22,400**  
carers in WA



**\$623 million**  
annual replacement cost in waged workers

**10.7%**  
(320,000 people)

of Western Australians are carers.



**24%**  
of carers in WA are in **crisis**.<sup>6</sup>

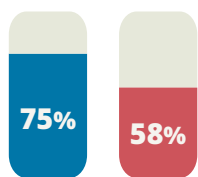


**27%** of WA carers cannot raise **\$2K** when needed.



**1 in 2** carers experience financial **stress**.<sup>7</sup>

## Personal Wellbeing Index Score<sup>7</sup>



General Population Carers



**47%** provide care to someone aged 65+.<sup>7</sup>



**49%** of carers provide 24/7 care.<sup>7</sup>



The average length of the caring role is **12.9** years.<sup>7</sup>

**90%** of these carers live with disproportionately lower protective factors of social support, self-efficacy, recognition and work-life balance.<sup>7</sup>

**1 in 5** carers in WA live outside the greater Perth area.<sup>7</sup>



## First Nations Carers

In the past 2 years, 1 in 5 identified carers had accessed emergency support.<sup>7</sup>



**1 in 3** say their home is not adequate for their caring role.<sup>7</sup>

**51.3%** have an annual income less than **\$50,000**.<sup>7</sup>



**2 in 5** are caring for more than 1 person.<sup>7</sup>

1. (ABS, 2022)  
2. (SAGE Design & Advisory, 2023)  
3. (Government of Western Australia, 2004)  
4. (Government of Western Australia, 2004)

5. (Deloitte Access Economics, 2020)  
6. (SAGE Design & Advisory, 2023)  
7. (National Carer Survey, 2022)  
8. (National Carer Survey, 2023)

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## 1.0 Better recognition of carers in Western Australia.

- a. Review of the WA Carers Recognition Act 2004 into a rights-based, enforceable Act.
- b. A new WA Carers Strategy.
- c. Widespread recognition, inclusion and representation of carers in legislation, policy and services, with a special focus on: young carers, First Nations carers, carers in WA regional and remote areas, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) carers and LGBTQIA+ carers.

Recognition has a significant direct effect on a carer's wellbeing. The more recognised and valued a carer feels by their community, service providers, family and friends – the higher their wellbeing will be.

Improvements in a carer's social supports and levels of recognition can also reduce the impact of their caring role on their wellbeing.<sup>9</sup>

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## 2.0 Investment to improve the health and wellbeing of carers.

- a. Carer-specific concessions, including access to government health and leisure facilities.
- b. Increased State Government investment in carer-specific services, including new investment in regional and remote carer supports.
- c. Investment in a holistic model of respite for carers, including major regional centres.

Carers have significantly higher rates of psychological distress than the average Australian. **Over half** of carers have poor wellbeing, compared to **25.4%** of adult Australians. Only **17.1%** of carers report having good health, compared to **47.9%** for the average Australian.<sup>10</sup>

Carers who have access to respite care, peer support and financial support are significantly more likely to have healthy levels of wellbeing.

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9. (SAGE Design & Advisory, 2023)

10. (Schirmer, Mylek, & Miranti, 2022)

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## 3.0 Better economic outcomes, carer advocacy and lived experience participation.


- a. Improved economic outcomes for carers, inclusive of: Review of and increase to the Carers Payment and Carers Allowance; Superannuation for carers; and the establishment of a WA Carer Card Program.
- b. Increased options, funding and support for systemic, individual and self-advocacy for carers.
- c. Improved awareness and options for the carer lived experience participation and peer workforce.

The cost of caring to carers is high and is not matched by government supports.

- The care provided by Australian carers is valued at **\$77.9 billion** per year and amounts to **2.2 billion** hours of unpaid care per year.
- The care provided by WA carers is valued at an estimated **\$9.4 billion** per year.
- On average, Australian carers lose **\$392,500** in lifetime earnings by age 67 and **\$175,000** in superannuation by age 67.
- **57%** of carers receiving government payments live below the poverty line.

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## 4.0 Improving the systems that carers navigate and use.

- a. Increased support, recognition and inclusion of carers within the NDIS, disability, mental health and aged care systems in WA.
  - b. Initiatives to increase carer awareness of systems and how to navigate them.
  - c. Improved awareness, access and safety outcomes for and of carers in emergency situations and natural disasters.
  - d. Housing options for carers that are timely, available, accessible and affordable.
  - e. Better support for carers and those they provide care for in WA early childhood and school systems.
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*'I am encouraged by the vision of a world where the role and contribution of unpaid carers is recognised and we have access to the quality support and services we need to live our own lives, focussing on issues such as our health and financial concerns along with how we may be supported while we are caring.'*

– response from a carer



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*'Every carer I know needs support, primarily financial, to enable them to get by day to day. Recognition is not going to allow carers to fund their own health needs, pay their bills, take a break, or retire and age with financial or housing security. I feel like a lot of money is being wasted on token reviews that make no difference to the lives of carers.'*

– response from a carer

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*'Education of support services and the general community that raises awareness of carers would make us feel less invisible and just taken for granted.'* – response from a carer

*'Acknowledgement of our existence - broadening the spotlight from the person requiring care, and focusing on the ripple effect of caring on others. Broader advocacy for those who care when those who care don't have the energy anymore. Raises the profile of carers in the general community, legitimising the role.'* – response from a carer