



Carers WA



2024-25 WA State Budget Summary

May 2024

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 with disability, mental health challenges, long term health conditions (including a chronic condition or terminal illness), have an alcohol or drug dependency, or who are frail aged. The person they care for may be a parent, partner, sibling, child, relative, friend or neighbour.

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.

Some important facts about carers include:

- There are currently 2.65 million unpaid carers in Australia.
- There are more than 320,000 families and friends in a caring role in Western Australia.
- The replacement value of unpaid care, according to a report undertaken by Deloitte, Access Economics, "The economic value of unpaid care in Australia in 2020" is estimated at \$77.9 billion per annum.

Acknowledgement of Country

Carers WA acknowledges the Wadjuk Noongar Nation's lands, water, customs, and culture of which the Carers WA Head Office is located. Carers WA recognises our services reach beyond the Perth region, and so we also acknowledge the cultural diversity of First Nation Peoples across our state and throughout Australia.



Enquiries

Email: info@carerswa.asn.au

Phone: 1300 227 377

Website: www.carerswa.asn.au

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	1
Enquiries	1
What is in the 2024-25 WA State Budget for carers?.....	3
Introduction	3
Carers WA 2024-25 WA State Budget Recommendations:.....	4
Summary	6
Carers	6
Housing	6
Cost of Living.....	7
Health and Mental Health	7
Other Initiatives	8
References	Error! Bookmark not defined.

What is in the 2024-25 WA State Budget for carers?

Introduction

On May 9th 2024, Treasurer Hon Rita Saffioti MLA handed down the 2024-25 WA State Budget, with a budget surplus of \$3.2 billion.

The budget featured a central focus on cost-of-living support for households and small businesses; boosting housing supply and affordability; investing in key services, including WA's health system, education and training; strengthening WA's communities; and diversifying and decarbonising our economy through reform to ease business, investments in key industries, and enabling infrastructure.

Carers WA is pleased to see measures in the budget for continued and increased carer supports, transport and Perth Zoo entry concessions, and broad cost of living, housing and health measures which will also have a much-needed positive impact on WA carers.

This combination of budget measures has the potential to have significant impact on WA carers, particularly in regional areas. A significant lack of housing across WA is contributing to shortages of critical workers within essential services, including health services. This places substantial strain on carers as they need to take on additional tasks and caring responsibilities, to fill these gaps in services, resulting in increased isolation, high carer burnout and reduced wellbeing.

However, while Carers WA looks forward to seeing the implementation of the Budget initiatives and positive impact on vulnerable families, we do need to reiterate the high need for the targeted carer supports which were recommended within Carers WA's pre-budget submission to the State Government. As many of these recommended initiatives were not within this State Budget, we are looking forward to further conversations and collaboration with government to see these implemented in the future.

Carers WA 2024-25 WA State Budget Recommendations:

1. Increased investment in existing carer services;

Continued and increased funding was requested for several of Carers WA's state-based carer specific programs, due to increasing need and operation of these programs over and above contracted volumes. Carers WA is pleased that several of these programs have been confirmed as continuing with an accompanying increase in funding, and we look forward to them continuing to be substantially beneficial to carers and the wider WA community.

2. New investment in regional and remote carer supports;

In WA, 24% of carers are in crisis¹, resulting in higher psychological distress, a greater impact of their caring role on work, inappropriate or increased hospital presentations of the care recipient, lower social support, recognition, work-life balance and self-efficacy². This is particularly prevalent in WA regional areas, in the midst of heightened and pronounced challenges that carers in regional areas have in accessing services and support for themselves and those they care for. This is indicative of a high need for increased investment and focus on ensuring carers in regional areas have timely and locally available access to services, including to funded in-home and residential respite care.

Carers WA has responded to these needs by maintaining and increasing its investment in regional coordinators in key regions such as the Great Southern, Esperance, Wheatbelt, Warren-Blackwood and is seeking to establish another coordinator in the Goldfields region.

Carers WA's 2024-25 State Budget submission requested the state to match its increased investment in regional carer support with an additional three regional coordinators. While this was unfortunately not funded within the 2024-25 WA State Budget, Carers WA looks forward to pursuing further opportunities to support carers in regional and remote WA.

3. Enhanced focus on preparation of carers for emergency situations;

Carers face the challenge of ensuring their own safety in emergencies as well as the safety of their care recipients, especially those who may have live with mobility, cognitive awareness, and/or physical and behavioural challenges. These circumstances place the whole family at increased risk. Carers WA proposed an initiative to reduce this risk to a level equal to average community members who do not have mobility, cognitive or mental health concerns, and also to assist DFES and first responders.

While this initiative was not funded on this occasion, the safety of carers and those they care for in emergency situations remains a high priority for Carers WA.

¹ (SAGE Design & Advisory, 2023)

² (SAGE Design & Advisory, 2023)

4. Establishment of a WA Carer Card Program;

Carers WA has been advocating for some time for the establishment of a WA Carer Card Program, modelled on the existing [Victorian Carer Card Program](#) which provides similar benefits to the Victorian Seniors Card Program. While Carers WA is disappointed this program was not funded within this State budget, we look forward to continued conversations with government on developing this initiative.

A WA Carer Card Program will assist in providing increased recognition, support and understanding for unpaid carers in WA. The Program would also give some cost-of-living relief to carers, an important consideration given recent price increases in the cost of many goods and services - on top of the already existing financial and economic challenges which carers face. Further, the card program would also serve for identification purposes for situations when a care recipient has need of their carer, such as to health appointments or a hospital stay.

The critical and significant work that unpaid carers provide across the country is vital to supporting Australia's strained health system. In fact, the total replacement cost of this informal care provided nationally was estimated in 2020 to be \$77.9 billion per year – 1% of Australia's GDP³.

5. Investment in a holistic model of respite for carers;

A lack of access to respite and the ability to take a break, remains one of the most significant issues for WA carers, particularly in regional and remote areas. In its 2024-25 pre-budget submission, Carers WA raised the need for the establishment of carer retreats in regional centres. This also needs to be coupled with access to affordable, local, high-quality respite services in the regions.

While some respite initiatives were included in this year's state budget, carer retreats in regional centres were unfortunately not included, but remain a high need and priority for carers and Carers WA.

³ (Deloitte Access Economics, 2020)

Summary

Carers WA is pleased to provide a summary of the main initiatives which impact on carers in the 2024-25 WA State Budget, and looks forward to seeing the positive impact of these measures over the coming years.

Carers

Carer supports:

- Continued and increased funding for several of Carers WA's programs, including the Carer Representation Program, the Prepare to Care Hospital Program and individual advocacy for mental health carers.

Concessions:

- Continued and increased investment in free travel during specified times for pensioners, seniors and carers on Transperth and regional town bus services (\$18.6 million).
- Free zoo entry for carers, as well as discounts for Seniors and Concession Card holders.⁴

Housing

- \$1.1 billion housing package focused on boosting supply, with total investment in housing and homelessness measures since 2021-22 to total \$3.2 billion (more information [here](#)).
- \$843 million in social and affordable housing and homelessness initiatives.
- \$92.2 million boost for homelessness support services and case management.
- Additional \$400 million in funding to expand the Social and Affordable Housing Investment Fund, which provides vital housing to vulnerable community members through the delivery and refurbishment of social housing stock.
- \$144 million to accelerate priority affordable housing projects.
- Additional \$179 million to maintain State portfolio of 45,500 social, key worker and Aboriginal homes.
- \$5 million Vacant Property Rental Incentive Scheme, which will offer incentives to eligible owners of vacant properties to bring them onto the rental market (more information [here](#)).
- \$50 million for essential government worker housing.⁵

⁴ (Government of Western Australia, 2024)

⁵ (Government of Western Australia, 2024)

Cost of Living

- \$762 million cost of living relief for WA households and support for small businesses, including:
 - A \$400 electricity credit for WA households and eligible small businesses (\$492.4 million investment).
 - Up to \$250 for every WA school student (\$103.5 million WA Student Assistance Payment Initiative).
 - Additional \$64.6 million to the Regional Airfare Zone Cap (RAZC) scheme, to reduce the cost of flying for regional residents (more information [here](#)).
 - \$1.5 million to support food relief for vulnerable WA families (more information [here](#)).
 - \$8.8 million for programs which support WA seniors, including within the Seniors Card Program and prevention of elder abuse initiatives such as the WA Elder Abuse Helpline and Information Service and Older People's Rights Service (more information [here](#)).
 - \$20.3 million increase in funding for the Regional Pensioner Travel Card (more information [here](#)), to increase the balance of cards by \$100.⁶

Health and Mental Health

- \$3.2 billion investment in WA's health system, including:
 - \$1.2 billion for public hospital services.
 - \$405 million for regional health services, including for Geraldton, Bunbury and Peel hospitals, and for the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS).
 - \$260 million on mental health and alcohol and other drug initiatives.
 - \$4.7 million for an extension to the Brief Crisis Intervention Service, for virtual, post-emergency department mental health follow ups for children, their families and carers in regional and remote areas.
 - \$10.2 million extra for community transitional or temporary respite care, or in aged care facilities, to enable more timely discharge of long-stay hospital patients when appropriate.
 - \$39 million for Child Development Services expansion, providing an extra 114 FTE workers such as paediatricians, clinical nurse specialists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists and audiologists.
 - \$4.4 million for a pilot program over two years supporting aged care facilities to provide temporary respite care for long stay patients awaiting permanent placement.⁷

⁶ (Government of Western Australia, 2024)

⁷ (Government of Western Australia, 2024)

Other Initiatives

- \$96 million for family and domestic violence initiatives and reforms.
- \$88 million for child protection initiatives.
- Implementation of reforms for improvement of fairness, advocacy and services for people with mental impairment who are in the justice system (\$70 million).
- \$16 million for youth justice programs for First Nations peoples and at-risk young people.⁸

⁸ (Government of Western Australia, 2024)

References

Deloitte Access Economics. (2020). *The value of informal care in 2020*. Deloitte Access Economics. Retrieved from https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/FINAL-Value-of-Informal-Care-22-May-2020_No-CIC.pdf

Government of Western Australia. (2024). 2024-25 WA State Budget. Perth, Western Australia, Australia.

SAGE Design & Advisory. (2023). *2022 National Carer Survey*. Unpublished.