

# 2025-26 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>1</sup>.

This care is unpaid and does not form part of a volunteer or work arrangement<sup>2</sup>.

**Many carers find their role fulfilling, enhancing their life purpose and relationships, while also acquiring new skills.**

However, only **37.5%** would recommend others to become carers<sup>3</sup>.

## Health and Wellbeing



WA carers' wellbeing score is at **56%**, significantly lower than the **75%** Australian average<sup>4</sup>, and they are **three times** more likely to experience loneliness<sup>5</sup>.



**51%** report a decline in their ability to maintain their own quality of life and **49%** also report that they find it harder to maintain their physical health.

## Finances



**48%** of WA carers face challenges in securing the financial resources required for their caring roles. In the past year, **55%** have dealt with financial stress<sup>6</sup>.



**A third** of these carers can't raise \$2,000 when needed<sup>7</sup> and **15%** have struggled to pay their utility bills on time at some point over the last year.

## System Navigation



**48%** of carers find it difficult to understand and interact with systems and **46%** report an increased struggle in managing the stress associated with their caring role<sup>8</sup>.



## The Caring Cliff

WA has more than **320,000** carers<sup>9</sup>, who provide **\$6.6 billion dollars** of unpaid care per year and on average provide **104 hours** of care per week<sup>10</sup>.

WA is heading towards a caring cliff; due to our ageing population and the increasing prevalence of mental ill-health, the demand for this care is projected to increase **23%** by 2030, however the number of carers available is only projected to increase by **16%** over this timeframe<sup>11</sup>.

**This represents a total shortfall by 2030 of:**



**22,400**  
carers in WA



**\$600 million**  
annual replacement  
cost in waged workers

1. (WA Government, 2004)
2. (WA Government, 2004)
3. (Mylek & Schirmer, 2024)
4. (Government of Western Australia, 2018)
5. (Deloitte Access Economics, 2020)
6. (Mylek & Schirmer, 2024)
7. (Deloitte Access Economics, 2024)
8. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)
9. (Mylek & Schirmer, 2024)
10. (Carers NSW, 2024)
11. (Carers NSW, 2024)

# 1.0 Better Recognition for WA Carers

- a. Establishment of a WA Carer Card Program.
- b. A new WA Carer Strategy, which ensures recognition, inclusion and representation of WA carers in legislation, policy and services, inclusive of First Nations carers, young carers, regional carers, CALD carers and LGBTQI+ SB carers.
- c. Review of the Carer Recognition Act 2004 (WA).
- d. Increased support, recognition and inclusion of WA carers within the systems that carers navigate and use. i.e. NDIS, disability, mental health, and aged care systems.
- e. Establishment of education and practical support initiatives which upskill WA carers to better understand and engage complex government systems and services. i.e. service navigation, self-advocacy, individual advocacy, systemic advocacy and resource development.



**57%** of WA carers do not feel recognised by government and **45%** do not feel recognised by their community.



Improved carer recognition and social factors can lift carer personal wellbeing to as high as **68%<sup>12</sup>**, but if carers further experience social isolation, their personal wellbeing level can drop even further to as low as **47%<sup>13</sup>**.



Carers with good support from friends and family are **55%** more likely to have healthy levels of wellbeing<sup>14</sup>.



## Voices of WA Carers

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.

*Note: Quote not attributed to the carer pictured.*



12. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)  
13. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)  
14. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

## 2.0 Investment to Improve the Health and Wellbeing of Carers

- a. Grants for WA carers (hardship grants and short break/respite grants).
- b. Increased support and recognition for WA regional carers and young carers.
- c. Carer-specific concessions, including access to government health and leisure facilities.
- d. Improved awareness, access and safety outcomes for and of WA carers in emergency situations and natural disasters.

Financial stress greatly affects carers' wellbeing, often leading to a cycle of instability and psychological distress that harms their mental and physical health<sup>15</sup>. Enhanced financial support is vital for their wellbeing and continuity in their caring role<sup>16</sup>.



Nearly **one third** of carers frequently have difficulty affording groceries; **one in six** carers have difficulty affording medication; and **23%** of carers have difficulty getting around due to the rising cost of public transport and fuel<sup>17</sup>.



**10.6%** of WA carers report never or only sometimes having enough food to not go hungry<sup>18</sup>.



**5%** of WA carers report never or only sometimes having a safe place to live<sup>19</sup>.



**20%** of WA carers report never or only sometimes having access to affordable health services<sup>20</sup>.



### Voices of WA Carers

There needs to be more recognition of carers outside of capital cities. Country families don't have access to the same services, respite, care and facilities that city families do. It makes a stressful situation even more difficult. There needs to be more conversation about the financial burden this places on families. Many carers are forced to leave the workforce to care.

*Note: Quote not attributed to the carer pictured.*



15. (Mylek & Schirmer, 2024)  
16. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

17. (SAGE Design & Advisory, 2023)  
18. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

19. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)  
20. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

## 3.0 Improved Economic, Employment and Education Outcomes for WA Carers

- a. Expansion and adoption of initiatives which assist businesses to lift carer retention and support in the workplace. i.e. Carer Friendly Employers Program; the Carer Friendly Workplace Initiative.
- b. Employment and education measures for WA carers which increase their engagement in education, employment and as part of the carer lived experience participation and peer workforce.
- c. Early identification and support of young carers and carers in WA early childhood and education settings.



Becoming a carer has resulted in a **64%** reduction in earned income for carers<sup>21</sup>.



**1 in 2** carers are doing less paid work than they would like to<sup>22</sup>.



Carers with supportive workplaces are **33%** more likely to have healthy levels of wellbeing<sup>23</sup>.



Being a young carer (under 25) affects their education<sup>24</sup>, leading to lower income, reduced social engagement, and poorer health. Insufficient support impacts their lifetime earnings and wellbeing<sup>25,26</sup>. Early intervention programs can mitigate these adverse effects<sup>27</sup>.



### Voices of WA Carers

Most carers I know have lost fulfilling careers, have limited superannuation, and quite simply cannot afford many of the things that non-carers can. My future and the futures of my carer friends quite frankly look very bleak. I'm fearful for my future and future security. I certainly won't have children who have any capacity to look after me if I become ill or when I'm old.

*Note: Quote not attributed to the carer pictured.*



21. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)  
22. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)  
23. (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023)  
24. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

25. Derived figures based on ABS numbers of people aged under 25 in WA and the maximum number of students allowable in WA classrooms.

26. (Moore, et al., 2019)  
27. (Moore, et al., 2019)