



# **2025-26 WA State Budget Summary**

**June 2025**

## About Carers WA

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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 3.04 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 (Boorlo) region, and so we also acknowledge the cultural diversity of First Nation Peoples across our state and throughout Australia.



### Enquiries

**Carissa Gautam**  
Systemic Policy and Strategy Officer  
Email: [policy@carerswa.asn.au](mailto:policy@carerswa.asn.au)

**Stuart Jenkinson**  
Systemic Policy and Strategy Officer  
Email: [policy@carerswa.asn.au](mailto:policy@carerswa.asn.au)

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# What is in the 2025-26 WA State Budget for WA Carers?

On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June, WA Treasurer and Deputy Premier Hon Rita Saffioti MLA handed down the 2025-26 WA State Budget, which had a strong focus on cost-of-living relief, investment in health and mental health, education and economic growth.

Carers WA is pleased that WA carers benefitted from continued funding for state-based carer initiatives such as Carers WA's Carer Representation Program, the Prepare to Care Hospital Program and individual advocacy for mental health carers. In addition, direct measures for carers also included entry to Perth Zoo and time-based transport concessions.

The WA State Budget also contained other measures which may have an indirect positive impact on WA carers. Initiatives included in cost-of-living relief, health and mental health, and education budget funding in particular are likely to have an impact on carers due to their strong connection to these sectors.

Although Carers WA's recommendations from our pre-budget submission were not adopted on this occasion, we appreciate this ongoing funding, concessions and indirect initiatives that may have a positive impact on WA carers.

These pre-budget recommendations included:

1. The establishment of a WA Carer Card.
2. Grants for WA Carers (hardship grants and short-break/respite grants)
3. Increased supports and recognition for WA regional carers and young carers.

We reiterate the high need for the targeted carer supports which were put forward in Carers WA's pre-budget submission and in our State Election Campaign, all of which were developed with feedback from carers and were strongly supported by WA carers. We look forward to ongoing conversations and collaboration to see opportunities to implement these much-needed measures in the near future.

## Carers WA's 2025-26 WA State Budget Recommendations

In its 2025-25 WA State Budget Submission, Carers WA advocated for three specific items:

### 1. The establishment of a WA Carer Card

**Carers WA continued to advocate for the establishment of a WA Carer Card Program.**

Despite the crucial role which carers have in supporting people who have need of it, carers face significant barriers in performing these caring responsibilities, including recognition, identification as a carer; accessing and navigating formal support systems; financial challenges; and the personal costs of the caring role.

WA carers have need of a tool which will assist in addressing these barriers, as well as in building recognition of carers at all levels, including within government and formal support systems. The establishment of a WA Carer Card Program is a tool which will achieve this recognition.

The caring role brings with it significant personal cost and isolation to the carer, which receive limited recognition from government, community and those who surround the carer. 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 reported having good health, compared to 47.9% for the average Australian<sup>1</sup>. Feeling recognised by their community and social connections is important to maintain a carer's wellbeing, and can be increased through formal and government recognition such as through a WA Carer Card.

Further, by age 67 primary carers will lose \$175,000 in superannuation and \$392,500 in lifetime earnings. For every year someone is a primary carer they will lose on average \$17,700 in superannuation and \$39,600 in lifetime earnings<sup>2</sup>. The top 10% of primary carers who are most impacted lose an average of \$444,500 in superannuation and \$940,000 in lifetime earnings by age 67<sup>3</sup>. While these long-term financial impacts cross multiple governmental jurisdictions, the short-term financial impacts can be addressed early by the state government through targeted benefits, concessions and waivers for carers.

The WA Carer Card will be an essential tangible and systemic recognition tool for carers to:

- Formally identify and validate the caring role under the *Carer Recognition Act 2004* (WA) and the WA Carers Charter.
- Provide carers with cost-of-living support through targeted benefits, concessions and waivers.

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<sup>1</sup> (Schirmer, Mylek, & Miranti, 2022)

<sup>2</sup> (Furnival & Cullen, 2022)

<sup>3</sup> (Furnival & Cullen, 2022)

- Provide a tool for government to specifically target future supports of particular benefit to WA carers, as well as build awareness and recognition of carers and their rights across many industries, including in the health and community sector.
- Ensure carers are formally identified and included in the ongoing health and medical needs of the person they are caring for.

## **2. Grants for WA Carers (hardship grants and short-break/respite grants)**

**Carers WA advocated for funding to establish carer grants programs for hardship grants and short-break/respite grants, with in-kind contributions from Carers WA to run the program.**

Initiatives which both strengthen informal networks and provide financial relief can substantially improve the mental wellbeing and resilience of carers<sup>4</sup>. The Grants for WA Carers program would offer both financial relief and the opportunity for carers to strengthen their informal networks.

### **Carer Hardship Grants**

Financial stress has one of the highest impacts on carers' levels of wellbeing. Many carers live in an inescapable cycle of financial instability which exacerbates their psychological distress, and impacts negatively on their mental and physical wellbeing<sup>5</sup>. Improved financial support for carers is critical to not only their wellbeing, but to them being able to continue in their caring role<sup>6</sup>. This is important not only for long-term financial supports, but also having short-term support available for when carers experience short-term hardship and crisis, which can quickly escalate if early intervention is not available.

Findings from the 2024 National Carer Survey indicated that WA carers experience significant financial strain, spend more than they earn, struggle to meet unexpected expenses, and pay extra care costs<sup>7</sup>. Many carers are dependent on government payments that fall short of the costs of daily living, resulting in many carers struggling to make do while being below the poverty line<sup>8</sup>.

Furthermore, more than half of WA carers have experienced some form of financial stress in the last twelve months, with a third of carers not being able to raise \$2,000 in a week for something important<sup>9</sup>. One in six carers also could not pay a gas, electricity, water or telephone bill in the last twelve months<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

<sup>5</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

<sup>6</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

<sup>7</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

<sup>8</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

<sup>9</sup> (Carers NSW, 2025)

<sup>10</sup> (Carers NSW, 2025)



Indeed, an unacceptable portion of carers report not even having their basic needs being met:

- 10.6% of WA carers report never or only sometimes having enough food to not go hungry<sup>11</sup>.
- 5.3% of WA carers report never or only sometimes having a safe place to live<sup>12</sup>.
- 20.4% of WA carers report never or only sometimes having access to affordable health services<sup>13</sup>.

#### Carer Short-breaks (respite) Grants

Carers who feel recognized by the community around them experience improved wellbeing, largely due to recognition improving social relationships and connectedness<sup>14</sup>. Levels of carer wellbeing are also impacted by informal support from family and friends, which in turn are also strengthened through community and formal recognition of carers<sup>15</sup>. However, many carers struggle to partake in social relationships and connectedness, especially for carers with complex or multiple caring roles, without accompanying support for the carer to support those they care for in their absence.

Access to respite for an informal carer can help carers to have a healthy level of wellbeing<sup>16</sup>, and better maintain and thrive in their caring role. Despite this, many barriers exist which hinder carers being able to access an appropriate level of respite services<sup>17</sup>. This need for respite and for carers to have a break is well recognised. Yet again and again, the results of the many Inquiries, Commissions, and legislative reviews fail to deliver respite which is as diverse as the diversity of caring roles need it to be. Where carers do access respite, often it becomes a break for the carer to be able to do housework, run errands, or to receive treatments for their own health.

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<sup>11</sup> (Carers NSW, 2025)

<sup>12</sup> (Carers NSW, 2025)

<sup>13</sup> (Carers NSW, 2025)

<sup>14</sup> (Schirmer, Mylek, & Miranti, 2022)

<sup>15</sup> (Schirmer, Mylek, & Miranti, 2022)

<sup>16</sup> (Schirmer, Mylek, & Miranti, 2022)

<sup>17</sup> (Schirmer, Mylek, & Miranti, 2022)

### **3. Increased supports and recognition for WA regional carers and young carers.**

**Carers WA advocated for funding to enable increased place-based supports for regional carers and for young carer dedicated staff (including in regional areas).**

Having access to carer support services helps to alleviate and buffer the negative impact of ineffective formal systems, which when not effective substantially increase carer psychological distress<sup>18</sup>.

Carers in regional areas and young carers face increased psychological distress, financial hardship, social isolation, educational and financial disadvantages, unemployment and poor physical and mental health.

#### **Regional WA Carers**

In Western Australia, 24% of carers are in crisis, impacted by a higher proportion of carers in rural and remote areas who are more likely to have higher needs due to prevailing systemic barriers in these regions<sup>19</sup>.

In comparison to their metropolitan peers, carers in WA regional areas experience:

- Greater housing inadequacy<sup>20</sup>.
- Lower access to basic needs. i.e. food security, housing safety, affordable health services, and reliable internet and transport<sup>21</sup>.
- Increased formal support system navigation challenges<sup>22</sup>.
- Higher social isolation and disconnection<sup>23</sup>.

This is in addition to shared carer experiences across WA of financial stress, unmet carer support needs and formal support system effectiveness<sup>24</sup>.

In addition, Australians in rural and remote areas face increased hospitalisation, death and injury rates due to limited service access<sup>25</sup>. Carers must compensate for these service gaps, leading to high caring responsibilities, and increasing the importance of carers in regional areas. Regional carers also encounter more service eligibility challenges for those they care for, resulting in higher costs of care and increased reliance on carers<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

<sup>19</sup> (SAGE Design & Advisory, 2023)

<sup>20</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

<sup>21</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

<sup>22</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

<sup>23</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

<sup>24</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

<sup>25</sup> (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023)

<sup>26</sup> (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)



## **WA Young Carers**

Due to their caring responsibilities, young carers (carers aged under 25 years) are often more mature, independent, compassionate, resilient and empathetic than their peers<sup>27</sup>. Early intervention programs for young carers who may be caring for some time, can mitigate outcomes of poor wellbeing which may result from their caring role<sup>28</sup>.

Recently, GENERATION survey found that nearly 1 in 6 young people in Australia identify as having caring responsibilities<sup>29</sup>. This means that in WA, there are estimated to be over 148,000 young carers (carers aged under 25 years), and up to 5.3 young carers in each WA classroom<sup>30</sup>.

Most of the time, the young carer will be providing care for their parent or a sibling, and over a third care for two or more relatives. Over one third of young carers are the primary carer, and 29% provide this care without any help from another family member<sup>31</sup>.

The type and intensity of care that young carers provide can vary widely, from 1 hour up to 50 hours per week<sup>32</sup>. Young carers act as parents for their siblings, undertake personal care tasks for those they care for, perform medical care (medication management, attending appointments, health system navigation), and provide emotional support<sup>33</sup>. Children as young as preschool age have been reported to provide caring activities,<sup>34</sup> however, research on the caring role this early is limited.

Young carers are one of the four most at risk groups of young people in Australia<sup>35</sup>, and are at greater risk than their peers of high psychological distress, financial distress<sup>36</sup>, social isolation, financial & educational disadvantage, unemployment, and poor physical and mental health<sup>3738</sup>. Further, being a young carer impacts on their engagement with education<sup>39</sup>. This results in lower income earning capacity, lack of social engagement, and poorer health and wellbeing outcomes. A lack of support and identification of young carers results in significant impact on their lifetime earnings, superannuation and general wellbeing<sup>4041</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> (Little Dreamers, 2021)

<sup>28</sup> (Moore, et al., 2019)

<sup>29</sup> (Edwards, et al., 2023)

<sup>30</sup> Derived figures based on ABS numbers of people aged under 25 in WA and the maximum number of students allowable in WA classrooms.

<sup>31</sup> (Moore, et al., 2019)

<sup>32</sup> (Moore, et al., 2019)

<sup>33</sup> (Saragosa, et al., 2022)

<sup>34</sup> (Saragosa, et al., 2022)

<sup>35</sup> Redmond and Skattebol et al, 2016)

<sup>36</sup> (Centre for Change Governance and NATSEM, University of Canberra, 2021)

<sup>37</sup> (Carers Australia, 2021)

<sup>38</sup> (Little Dreamers, 2021)

<sup>39</sup> (Moore, et al., 2019)

<sup>40</sup> (Moore, et al., 2019)

<sup>41</sup> (Furnival & Cullen, 2022)

## Summary

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Carers WA is pleased to provide a summary of the main initiatives which impact on WA carers in the recently released 2025-26 WA State Budget. We look forward to seeing the positive impact of these measures over the coming years.

This information has been sourced from the WA 2025-26 State Budget Papers and supporting documents<sup>4243444546</sup>.

### Carers

#### Carer Supports

- Continued 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, Transwa and regional town bus services.
- Free zoo entry for carers, as well as discounts for Seniors and Concession Card holders.

### Health and Mental Health

- An additional \$1.4 billion in spending on health and mental health, including \$829 million for hospital services.
- Increased investment in health infrastructure, including the Women and Babies hospital; and emergency department expansions at Royal Perth Hospital and St John of God Midland.
- \$1.2 million to ADHD WA to support provision of information and wraparound services for children and adolescents living with ADHD, as well as their parents and carers.
- Expansion of the Virtual Emergency Department services.
- Establishment of three Older Adult Care hubs.
- Continuation of the emergency access reform program, and expansion of the number of Time to Think beds (which help long-stay patients transition out of hospital).
- An 18-month pilot of 'GP ASK' and funding for GPs to communicate directly with specialists on behalf of patients.

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<sup>42</sup> (Government of Western Australia , 2025)

<sup>43</sup> (Government of Western Australia, 2025)

<sup>44</sup> (Government of Western Australia, 2025)

<sup>45</sup> (Government of Western Australia, 2025)

<sup>46</sup> (Government of Western Australia, 2025)

- \$39 million to partner with Ngala to deliver free access to residential parenting services that provide mental health and early intervention support to new parents.
- Improving access to mental health and health services for regional WA through:
  - Increase to the PATS Fuel Subsidy (from 26 cents per kilometre to 40 cents per kilometre).
  - Establishment of a virtual mental health service for children and their families across rural and remote WA.
  - Establishment of a mental health child and adolescent Acute Care and Response Team in Bunbury.
  - Establishment of an adult alcohol and other drugs residential rehabilitation treatment service in Albany.
  - Construction and delivery of a Derby Wellness Centre
  - Preliminary work on a Broome Withdrawal Service

## Cost of Living

- An additional \$177 million in energy bill relief for households and eligible small businesses – meaning a \$150 credit for every WA household over 2025-26.
- An additional \$343 Energy Assistance Payment for eligible families.
- Residential battery rebate and no-interest loan scheme rollout – to increase access to cheaper batteries for long-term lower energy bills.
- From January 1, 2026, the roll out of the one zone flat fare in suburbs and regional towns, capping fares at \$2.80 for autoloader SmartRiders.
- KidSport Vouchers of \$300 for eligible WA families.
- An additional \$100 per annum to the Regional Pensioner Travel Card – bringing this to \$775 per year.
- Halving the cost of Transwa fares from 1 January 2026.
- Continuation of the regional airfare zone cap.
- \$3 million for Kids Access All Areas passes for more children to access Scitech, art and cultural events.
- Expansion of the HUGS program to social housing tenants for water bills.

## Education

- \$708 million to meet student enrolment growth for government and non-government schools, including \$395 million to support students with disability.
- Continuation of free public transport for school students.
- The WA Student Assistance Payment for 2025 – which provides \$250 for every secondary student and \$150 for every primary and kindergarten student.
- Expansion of the School Breakfast Program.
- An additional \$22 million to increase the number of free TAFE courses.
- An additional \$1.8 million investment in education and training, including:
  - \$29 million to pilot free full-time kindergarten in 10 sites in WA;
  - \$15 million for more schools to provide before and after school care;
- An additional \$36 million to recognize and support the continued development of education assistants to support children with special needs.

## Housing

- Extending the WA Rent Relief Program.
- Additional stamp duty cuts for first home buyers
- \$210 million for 1,000 shared equity loans in new apartment and townhouse developments.
- \$75 million in no and low-interest loans to support affordable build-to-rent developments.
- Continued delivery of a program to create 5,800 social homes.

## Other Initiatives

- An additional \$250 million to increase frontline child protection and out-of-home care services.
- \$41 million on youth justice rehabilitation programs and initiatives to reduce youth crime.
- An additional \$119 million to support people with disability, which includes WA's transition to the NDIS Full Scheme Agreement and supported community living.
- Establishment of a Veteran's Facilities Fund.
- Establishment of a Residential Eating Disorder Facility.

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