

2026-27 Pre-Budget Submission

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 frailty¹.

This care is unpaid and does not form part of a volunteer or work arrangement².

The Challenge

The Wellbeing Gap for Carers

WA carers experience wellbeing levels **20%** below the average Australian¹. This gap can be reduced through improved carer recognition and social connections but is worsened by social isolation. WA cannot afford unwell people caring for unwell people.

The Caring Cliff

WA faces a "caring cliff" due to an ageing population and rising incidents of mental health conditions. Demand for care is projected to grow by **23%** by 2030, but the number of carers is only projected to increase by **16%**², leaving a shortfall of **22,400** carers. This shortfall equates to over **\$600 million** in additional health system costs to support individuals requiring care. Without immediate action to support and recognise carers, WA's formal care sector will be negatively impacted by insufficient informal care.

This represents a total shortfall by 2030 of:

 **22,400** carers in WA  **\$600 million** annual replacement cost in waged workers



Snapshot of Carers in WA

WA carers have a personal wellbeing score of **56%**, significantly below that of the average Australian population at **75%**³.

Carers are more than **three times** as likely to report high levels of loneliness than other Australians⁴.

55% of WA carers have experienced financial stress in the last 12 months⁵.

33% of WA carers cannot raise \$2,000 when needed⁶.

15% of WA carers could not pay gas, electricity, water or telephone bill on time at some point in the last 12 months.

Nearly **one third** of First Nations carers reported not feeling services are Culturally safe⁷.

More than **2 in 5** First Nations carers provide care for more than one person⁸.

1. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)
2. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)
3. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)
4. (Mylek & Schirmer, 2024)
5. (Carers NSW, 2024)
6. (Carers NSW, 2024)
7. (Carers NSW, 2024)
8. (Carers NSW, 2023)

The Solution

1.0 WA Carer Card

ASK: The establishment of a WA Carer Card

COST: The estimated management cost of a WA Carer Card Program is \$2.6 million per annum

WA's 320,000 carers⁹ urgently require tangible recognition at a systemic level from the State Government. Establishing a WA Carer Card acknowledges the \$6.6 billion in unpaid care per year WA carers contribute¹⁰.

Currently, WA carers feel significantly unrecognised by government, community, service providers and formal services. This does not make them feel valued¹¹, impacts wellbeing, their ability to sustain their caring role, and quality of life outside of caring. Increasing recognition improves carer wellbeing and strengthens their informal support networks, which enhances their resilience and overall quality of life¹².

To address the growing shortfall of carers, we need to support carer wellbeing now by improving formal recognition and reducing isolation.

Carers WA recommends:

The establishment of a WA Carer Card to:

- Identify and validate carers under the Carer Recognition Act 2004 (WA) and WA Carers Charter.
- Provide cost-of-living relief through targeted benefits, concessions and waivers.
- Enable future targeted support for carers by government, while raising awareness of carers' rights across industries, including the health and community sectors.
- Ensure carers are included in the ongoing health and medical needs of the person they care for.

2.0 Grants for WA Carers

ASK: The establishment of a WA Carer Grants Program for hardship and short-break (respite) grants

COST: \$500,000 per annum

Supporting carers' financial stability and social connections is critical to their resilience and wellbeing.

Many carers face an inescapable cycle of financial instability, which exacerbates psychological distress and negatively impacts their mental and physical wellbeing¹⁴. Improved financial support is essential to sustaining carers in their roles and ensuring their wellbeing¹⁵. Carers also need short-term financial relief during crisis to prevent hardship from escalating.

Carers WA recommends:

The establishment of a two-pronged carer grants program to improve carer wellbeing through:

- Carer Hardship Grants: Providing financial relief for carers facing crises.
- Carer Short Break (Respite) Grants: Enabling carers to take meaningful breaks and strengthen informal support networks.

This program will consist of:

- \$300,000 in annual reoccurring funding for Carer Hardship Grants.
- \$200,000 in annual reoccurring funding for Carer Short Break Grants.

9. (Deloitte Access Economics, 2024)

10. (Government of Western A, 2018)

11. (Deloitte Access Economics, 2024)

12. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

13. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

14. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

15. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

The Solution

Social Connections and Informal Support

Carers who feel recognised by their community report better wellbeing, as recognition strengthens their social relationships¹⁶. Carer wellbeing improves with support from family, friends, and formal recognition¹⁷. However, many carers, particularly those with complex or multiple caring roles, struggle to engage in social networks without support to manage their caring responsibilities in their absence.

This two-pronged program will improve carer wellbeing through:

- Carer Hardship Grants: Providing financial relief for carers facing crises.
- Carer Short Break (Respite) Grants: Enabling carers to take meaningful breaks and strengthen informal support networks.

To administer these grants effectively, Carers WA will provide in-kind contributions, including:

- 0.6 FTE staff for managing and distributing grants.
- Development of systems, payment structures, and registration processes.
- A dedicated phone line and online application process.

Carers in hardship could access up to \$2,000 annually to cover essential costs such as living expenses, rent, utilities, or vehicle registration. This program focuses specifically on WA carers, offering broader support than existing grant initiatives.

Carers WA urges the WA Government to take immediate action to address the wellbeing and recognition of carers to prevent a future care crisis.

16. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

17. (SAGE Design and Advisory, 2025)

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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.’

‘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.’

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.’

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