



Carers Australia

Strategic Plan 2012–2015





About Carers

There are 2.6 million carers in Australia who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, drug or alcohol issues or who are frail aged. Caring can be a rewarding experience, deepening friendships and relationships. It can also be physically and emotionally demanding, potentially affecting carers' health and wellbeing. Carers can experience reduced physical, mental and emotional health once caring commences and over time the effects may be intensified.

Caring is an important part of the human experience. Within families, friendships and other special relationships many Australians care and are cared for by their relatives, friends and important others. These relationships are often characterised by love and support and can be incredibly enriching. Parents receiving care can still nurture, teach and protect their children; partners share intimacy and mutual support;

grandparents, siblings, children, relatives and friends enjoy loving relationships. An individual's illness, disability, mental health or alcohol or other drug issue may mean that they need extra assistance while families and carers might need support so they can all fully participate in the life of the community and benefit from what it has to offer.

The Journey So Far

The carer movement has been working over many years to have carers' needs brought to the attention of government and the community more broadly, to achieve greater recognition for the valuable contribution carers make to the lives of those people in our community who have a disability, a chronic illness or who are frail aged. We have been heartened that the movement has made



significant gains in recent years. We have been especially encouraged by the increased awareness of, and recognition given to, carers across the community and particularly within government. There is now carer recognition legislation at the federal level and in most states and territories. In 2011 the Australian Government released its National Carer Strategy and in 2012 it will be followed up by an Implementation Plan.

Carer issues have also been given attention in key areas of social policy development such as the proposed National Disability Insurance Scheme and in mental health and aged care reform. The Government's proposal to develop a network of Carer Support Centres, as an integral part of both aged care and disability support reforms, will add a new dimension to the delivery of national carer support services.

Increased awareness and recognition have also been evident in the community more generally. We see more carer stories or references to carers in the media and

we come across more information prepared for carers, for example in GP's surgeries or at local libraries.

Pleasing though these developments are, there is still much work to be done with and for carers. Many people whom we would consider to be 'carers' still do not think of themselves as such, and as a result miss out on accessing services and support that is available. Carers still struggle to be recognised by health care professionals. Carer issues may now be more commonly on the policy agenda but they seem to be issues of secondary importance to policy makers. Above all we know that the lives of too many carers are negatively affected by fatigue, social isolation, poor physical and mental health and financial stress.

The ageing of the population and the predicted decrease in the number of carers who will be available represent enormous challenges for the Australian community and for families. Carers Australia will continue to raise awareness of the needs of carers and work with all our stakeholders to develop innovative and sustainable options.



Who we are

Carers Australia is the peak national body representing Australia's carers.

We take a leadership role and respond to carers' needs and those of the people they care for, being mindful of their financial challenges and in many cases, lack of social inclusion. Carers Australia advocates on behalf of Australia's carers to influence policies and services at a national level. We work collaboratively with partners and our member organisations, the state and territory carers associations, to deliver a range of essential national carer services.

Our Vision

An Australia that values and supports the contribution that carers make both to the people they care for and to the community as a whole.

Our Mission

Carers Australia's role is to promote and support carers and the people they care for through effective advocacy, quality programs and community awareness activities that respect and enhance these relationships while meeting carers' needs.



The Way We Work

- Carers, the people that they care for and their families are at the centre of everything that we do
- Our work is undertaken in close collaboration with our member associations and strategic partners, working towards a common goal
- We act with integrity, ensuring accountable and ethical organisational practice
- We ensure that our work, our activities and our organisation encourage personal growth and empowerment, especially of carers, the people they care for and their families
- We celebrate diversity, recognising that carers come from all walks of life and have different needs
- We strive for innovation, and continuous improvement. We develop new ideas and encourage innovation and creativity.

Carers Australia will achieve its mission through awareness raising, advocacy and the delivery of national carer services.



Our Strategic Plan

Carers Australia's Strategic Plan 2012-2015 represents our renewed commitment to tackling the issues faced by Australia's carers and to building a better Australia in which carers can live, work, socialise and care.

To achieve this, we are seeking to engage more fully with carers and those they care for and with our members, the Network of state and territory carers associations. We particularly recognise the need to engage with young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. And we recognise the need to deepen our engagement with our other stakeholders: donors, sponsors, supporters, government, business and other like-minded organisations.

Our Strategic Plan recognises that it is critical that all parts of the organisation are aligned to the single vision of an Australia that values and supports carers and we will regularly review our progress towards achieving this goal.



Moving Forward

Carers Australia has five specific goals for 2012-15 and they are to:

Engage with carers, to ensure that our awareness raising and advocacy truly reflects the diversity of their situations and needs.

What we will do to achieve this:

- Actively listen to carers and strengthen our understanding of their experiences, needs and wishes
- Utilise social media and new technologies to engage with carers, the people that they care for, and their families across the country
- Initiate opportunities for carers, the people that they care for, and their families, to participate in Carers Australia's events, activities and publications
- Invest in our Carer Ambassador network to assist us to raise awareness of the reality of carers' lives.



As the lead expert in the field, continue to raise greater awareness of carers, carer issues and Carers Australia.

What we will do to achieve this:

- Develop information, events, campaigns and engagement opportunities to build community understanding of carers, focusing on Carers Week as our key national event
- Initiate and engage in public dialogue on issues affecting carers, through policy papers, conference presentations, participation in public campaigns and membership of alliances
- Ensure a strong public presence through a wide range of media.



Strengthen our advocacy with key decision makers to ensure that public policy reflects the interests of carers.

What we will do to achieve this:

- Continue to be the lead public voice for carers on matters of public policy, through our advocacy to government, including in relation to the implementation of government reforms in aged care and disability
- Activate our positive relationships with the federal government and members of parliament to ensure carer issues remain at the forefront of political debate and to ensure the full implementation of the Government's National Carers Strategy
- Work in close collaboration with carers and the Network of carers associations to expand our evidence base and champion the cause of carers, the people that they care for and their families
- Work with like-minded organisations to ensure the interests of carers, the people that they care for and their families, are given recognition, respect and opportunities
- Assess emerging carer needs and advocate with government to respond to gaps in service provision.



Manage, strengthen and grow services of excellence.

What we will do to achieve this:

- Continue to build and maintain positive relationships with the Network of carers associations and other organisations to deliver services and support to carers that contribute to carers' physical and emotional health, financial security and social inclusion
- Improve and expand the range of quality national carer services
- Evaluate national services to ensure that they are delivered using consistent and accountable practices
- Activate strategic alliances, collaborations and partnerships with other organisations to improve the delivery of national carer services
- Work closely with our funding bodies to ensure compliance and high quality program design.



Increase our standing as a credible, professionally competent and trusted organisation.

What we will do to achieve this:

- Develop a detailed Board governance charter in support of our commitment to high quality decision-making and regular review of performance
- Ensure a flexible and responsive workplace, investing in our staff, aiming to be an employer of choice
- Be financially sound and accountable for our decisions
- Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan as an integral part of engaging more fully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and the people for whom they care
- Leverage technology to effect best practice across all aspects of our work.

Patron

Her Excellency the Governor-General
of the Commonwealth of Australia

Ms Quentin Bryce AC, CVO

Unit 1, 16 Napier Close

Deakin ACT 2600

ABN 12 231 938 308

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www.carersaustralia.com.au