



**Submission to the
Department of Jobs and Small Business
Discussion Paper:**

**The next generation of
employment services**

3 August 2018

AN AUSTRALIA THAT VALUES AND SUPPORTS ALL CARERS

ABOUT CARERS AUSTRALIA

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing the diversity of Australians who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends with a:

- disability
- chronic condition
- mental illness or disorder
- drug or alcohol problem
- terminal illness
- or who are frail aged

Carers Australia believes all carers, regardless of their cultural and linguistic differences, age, disability, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identification and geographical location should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians.

They should be able to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family, social and community life, employment and education.

For information contact:

Ms Ara Cresswell

Chief Executive Officer

Carers Australia

Unit 1, 16 Napier Close

DEAKIN ACT 2600

Telephone: 02 6122 9900

Facsimile: 02 6122 9999

Email: acresswell@carersaustralia.com.au

Website: www.carersaustralia.com.au

INTRODUCTION

Carers Australia welcomes the initiative to update the delivery of government funded employment services, to address the shortcomings of the current approach, and to learn from best practice. In particular, we welcome the following proposals:

- Enhanced services would be targeted at job seekers who are highly disadvantaged.
- Widening the concept of workplace disadvantage to expand beyond the narrow range of job seekers currently identified as disadvantaged.
- Updating jobseeker training with a focus on transferable skills, especially for those who face barriers to entering or changing employment, to meet the needs of a changing economy.
- Providing job seekers with greater choice and control with respect to service providers and the elements of service provisions (including with respect to the elements of their job plan).
- A higher degree of responsiveness to regional variations in the opportunities for job seekers.

We endorse the approach and recommendations of the ACOSS submission which clearly delineates and unpacks some of the more generalised concepts in the Discussion Paper and maps out paths for the customised delivery of employment services in the interests of efficiency, equity and the optimisation of outcomes.

Our focus in this submission is on the approaches canvassed in the Discussion Paper with respect to disadvantaged job seekers and how they apply to family friend carers of people with disability, chronic illness, mental health challenges and the aged who are seeking to enter or re-enter employment.

It has always been a source of puzzlement and frustration to Carers Australia that, often after years out of the workforce to provide unpaid care, working age carers who come to a point where their caring role has significantly reduced or has ceased have never received any special consideration - either through Centrelink JSCI assessments or support from employment services - when they seek to re-enter the labour market.

This is despite the fact that over a number of years we have made submissions to the Department of Employment and other major government enquires with a focus on transition from welfare to employment. In some cases the final reports of these inquiries

have acknowledged and recommended that carers need special employment assistance and training to transition to the workforce.¹

We note that there is absolutely no mention of unpaid family and friend carers in the Discussion Paper and there is only one reference in the Appendices, but this refers to an initiative of the UK Government.

Carer Case Study:

“I was a carer for 17½ years. My mother suffered a stroke and was in a wheelchair, paralysed on the right side, and could not speak. I worked full time in the power industry as a tradesman for five years after my mum had a stroke. And then my father was very ill with a heart condition and he passed away. I worked for another year, with some assistance to look after my mum in our family home. She was rated as a full nursing care person.

My sister suffered a stroke so I left work in 1996 and went on the Carer Payment full time. I cared for mum until she passed away in January 2009.”

“When mum passed away I had the three months’ bereavement time and went to Centrelink.”

“It is like you fall through the cracks and you do not fit any existing category after being a carer and on the Carer Payment so you are not recognised as being a carer and you are just a Newstart person that was a carer.”

THE LABOUR FORCE DISADVANTAGES FOR CARERS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

As a group, carers, especially primary carers, seeking employment after a significant time out of the workforce share many of the characteristics of other disadvantaged job seekers at risk of economic disadvantage. (Primary carers are those who provide the most substantial amount of care to one or more people with disability, chronic illness, psycho-social conditions, terminal illness or who are aged and unable to care for themselves.)

¹ Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee Inquiry into *The adequacy of the allowance payment system for job seekers and others, the appropriateness of the allowance payment system as a support into work, and the impact of the changing labour market*, November 2012. Report of the Reference Group on Welfare Reform to the Minister for Social Services, *A New System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes*, February 2015

For example:

- Carers are significantly more likely to have lower levels of education, higher levels of unemployment, lower levels of workforce participation and to be more income poor than non-carers.

Table 8.3.1: Income, employment and education levels for primary carers, other (non-primary) carers and non-carers, 2015

Measure	Primary carers	Other (non-primary) carers	Non-carers
Median gross personal weekly income ^(a) (\$)	520	813	900
Government pension or allowance as main source of income ^(a) (%)	42.7	18.0	11.3
Unemployment rate ^(b) (%)	7.3	6.4	5.4
Workforce participation rate ^(b) (%)	43.3	63.9	69.2
Educational attainment of Year 12 or higher ^(b) (%)	63.2	69.0	71.3

(a) People aged 15–64 years.
 (b) People aged 15 and over.
 Source: ABS 2016.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Australia's Welfare 2017*

- Forty-five per cent of primary carers are between the ages of 40 and 65 and the average age of a primary carer is 55. Carers in this group seeking to transition into the workforce will face the same barriers as other mature age job seekers.²
- Thirty-three per cent of all carers³ and 33 per cent of carers receiving the Carer Payment⁴ live in inner and outer regional areas where job opportunities are harder to find.

What distinguishes carers from many other disadvantaged groups is the amount of time they spend out of the workforce. In this context it is noteworthy that:

- Carers who have contributed the most hours and years of care are least likely to be in a position to transition with any ease to the job market. In 2015 over 25 per cent of primary carers surveyed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics had been caring for

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABC), Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), 2015

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABC), Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), 2015

⁴ Department of Social Services, Try, Test and Learn – Working Aged Carers <https://www.dss.gov.au/review-of-australias-welfare-system/australian-priority-investment-approach-to-welfare/try-test-and-learn-fund/working-age-carers>

between 5 and 9 years, and 28 per cent had been caring for between 10 and 24 years.⁵

It is not surprising then, that carers generally remain dependent on income support for a very long time after their caring role has diminished or ceased. According to the *2017 Valuation Report* for the Australian Priority Investment Approach to Welfare, around two thirds of those on Carer Payment who are projected to exit over the next 10 years will move on to another income support payment, and a substantial proportion of them will move onto a working age payment.⁶

Even if carers seeking work have had work experience prior to taking on an intensive caring role:

- They often have a severely attenuated and interrupted work history and no current referees.
- In many cases their previous qualifications, including certificates and licences, no longer meet current standards and may, indeed, be defunct.
- Even soft skills, such as basic IT literacy, have changed dramatically and they are unlikely to have kept up to date.
- The jobs they previously had may not exist anymore or have radically changed or declined in number.
- They do not understand how they can translate the skills and personal attributes acquired in their caring role can be transferred to the workplace. These skills have been identified as including administrative, advocacy, time management, multi-tasking and adaptive problem solving skills.⁷ Carers also tend to acquire personal attributes which are valued by employers, including determination and persistence and emotional intelligence. But they need to be made aware of how to use these attributes when seeking work.
- They are going to need help putting together a job resume.
- They may need financial assistance to acquire the basics required for applying for a job, including clothing and transport costs.
- It is likely to be a very long time since they went to a job interview (if ever) and they will need guidance on how to proceed and present themselves.
- Even if they do understand that transitioning to employment will mean finding a job very different to others they have held, they struggle to imagine what shape their future

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABC), Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), 2015

⁶ Department of Social Services, *Australian Priority Investment Approach to Welfare - 2017 Valuation Report*, pages 102-3, <https://www.dss.gov.au/review-of-australias-welfare-system/2017-valuation-report>

⁷ Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council, *Improving Recognition of Carers' Skills Literature Review*, 2014, pp.20-21

employment might take and may be unaware of what realistic opportunities are available to them.

THE PLACE FOR JOB SEEKING CARERS OR FORMER CARERS IN THE NEW GENERATION OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Under the circumstances described above, long time carers seeking to re-enter the workforce are going to need the enhanced level of services identified in the Discussion Paper.

The ACOSS submission provides a useful breakdown of what these services should comprise over and above core services such as assistance using online job search services and referral to services to build up essential skills such as VET programs.

ACOSS identifies that more intensive services for disadvantaged job seekers should include face-to-face services with a skilled employment consultant who can help them to:

- build up their confidence
- identify the sort of work which will provide them with job satisfaction and the training they require to get these jobs
- be placed in subsidised work experience environments
- identify how they need to present themselves in job applications and in person.

As noted above, very important for carers is the need to help them identify the skills and attributes they are likely to have built up in their caring role which are transferable to working environments, even if they are not looking for paid caring roles or employment in the aged care, disability or health sectors.

Another element of support which should be offered to disadvantaged job-seekers identified in both the Discussion Paper and the ACOSS submission is to link them with community services outside the employment system which they will need to be work ready. Carers tend to be socially isolated and they may have lost their connection to the wider community. Many carers will have relied on carer supports such as counselling, mentoring and peer support while they have been in their caring role. The need to continue to access these types of supports remains, even if it is through different channels. It is important to recognise that the relinquishment of care is a source of grief, anxiety and loss of personal identity and purpose for many carers. This is so especially when the person being cared for

has died, but also where the point has been reached when they need to be transferred to a paid care environment such as residential aged care. Access to subsidised counselling and connection to community services and activities where they can begin to re-engage in community is important to being psychologically equipped to transition to work.

One model of the type of support carers transitioning into work may need is being trialled for young carers under the Department of Social Services' Try, Test and Learn initiative. It uses both a digital platform and face-to-face support to address the special needs of young carers. An online platform will use data analytics and augmented intelligence to match guaranteed job opportunities and training with young carers. Young carers will also receive six months of post job placement support, such as help with settling in and mentoring and mediation. They will also continue to receive carer-specific supports such as counselling and peer support through carer organisations.⁸

Another existing model of job seeker support for young people entering the workforce for the first time is the Transition to Work (TtW) program. The key elements of this program would also be applicable to carers of all ages, or indeed to any disadvantaged job seeker seeking to enter the workforce either for the first time or after a very extended period of time. This service supports eligible young people to get work by helping them develop practical skills, connect with education or training, undertake work experience and find local job opportunities. It also connects them with other relevant local community services.⁹

⁸Department of Social Services, Data-driven job opportunities for young carers, <https://www.dss.gov.au/review-of-australias-welfare-system/australian-priority-investment-approach-to-welfare/try-test-and-learn-fund/data-driven-job-opportunities-for-young-carers>

⁹ Department of Jobs and Small Business, Transition to Work, <https://www.jobs.gov.au/transition-work>

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the level of disadvantage experienced by job seeking carers whose caring responsibilities have diminished or ceased be clearly recognised, explicitly identified and addressed in the development of the new generation of employment services delivery.
2. That the model outlined in the ACOSS submission to the Discussion Paper guide the implementation of the new generation of employment services, especially with respect to disadvantaged job seekers.