



2022



# FEDERAL ELECTION PLATFORM

## OUR 'WHY'

*Carers of all ages and experiences should have the same quality of life as other Australians so they can live their best lives.*

## INTRODUCTION

Thirteen years on from the 2009 *Who Cares...?: Report on the inquiry into Better Support for Carers* by the House of Representatives Committee carers are still not recognised or embedded within reform.

The Inquiry's body of evidence clearly illustrated the profound physical, emotional and financial effects that providing care has on carers and on their families and called on carers, care receivers, governments and society – to share the responsibility of providing care more evenly.

Becoming a carer is often not a choice, and the impacts on carers can be profound, particularly on their own health and wellbeing. Never has this been more evident than the experience of carers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Isolated, sheltering our most vulnerable Australians at home, carers have barely been recognised or acknowledged for the work they have done. When the pandemic is over and Australians return to business as usual, many carers' lives

will not change – they will continue to be isolated, financially disadvantaged and unrecognised.

It is time for carers to enter the centre of policy consideration. Carers as partners and contributors to care is one of the last unexamined areas of health and social policy. The Aged Care Royal Commission has recognised the importance of adequately supporting carers, and the Productivity Commission report into Mental Health sees carers as key partners in care who are financially disadvantaged and ignored. It is our hope the Australian Government too, recognises and values carers through implementation of these four initiatives.



## Economic and financial security for carers

**We are seeking a coherent and flexible approach to address the barriers and long-term impacts on carers' financial and economic security as they maintain and thrive in their caring roles.**

1. That the Government asks the Productivity Commission to undertake a broad review of economic and financial support for carers, including:

- » Model the costs and benefits of providing retirement solutions such as a superannuation guarantee or carer pension credits to people who have had reduced employment opportunities to provide continuous care and rely on the Carer Payment.
- » Review the Carer Payment and Carer Allowance and recommend ways to incentivise carers to participate in the workforce, education and training, without affecting carers who cannot work.
- » Conduct a cost of caring and living analysis of carers to examine implications for short-term and long-term financial security and economic outcomes across caring roles, with a particular focus on women, single carers and young carers.



## Equitable access to respite

**Equitable access to respite is essential for all carers in order to ensure the sustainability and longevity of the carer relationship, regardless of location, type of caring or circumstance or system accessed.**

1. That Government supports equitable access to respite, regardless of relationship to funding or portfolio with attention to availability, accessibility and affordability; responsiveness to the needs of both carer and care receiver of respite services; and responsiveness to the needs of carers and people receiving care living in regional, rural and remote areas. This must involve:
  - » A demand and needs analysis for respite care among carers, including across different categories of caring, such as aged care, disability, mental health, alcohol and drug services, and palliative care programs.
  - » Journey mapping to better understand the characteristics of carers, the person receiving care and the broader social network that combine to contribute to situations with higher demand for emergency and planned respite.
  - » Increase respite offerings in community settings and within the home, based on demand analysis, journey mapping and addressing barriers to funding capital works, ongoing service delivery and workforce issues for all respite types.
2. That Government undertakes data collection improvements across settings and sectors to capture respite utilisation and satisfaction outside of residential type facilities, to continue to inform policy, planning and funding decisions.



## Strengthen carer recognition and accountability within Government

**Recognition of carers is crucial in the post-COVID world, and must focus on carer reform.**

1. That Government name a Minister for Carers to lead a whole-of-government approach to carer recognition, inclusion, and support, and establish an Office for Carers.
2. That Government appoints a Commissioner for Carers to report to the Minister through the Office for Carers and:
  - » Provide advice to the Minister for Carers and Government on the needs and interests of carers, particularly those carers who are vulnerable, at risk or disadvantaged.
  - » Establish a high level cross departmental forum to coordinate carer legislation, policy, programs and services so that they are effectively linked across Commonwealth portfolios.
  - » Instigate and oversee the development of a whole-of-government National Carer Strategy and Implementation Plan with outcome measures that complement jurisdictional based carer strategies.
  - » Ensure support of carers through the removal of barriers to participate in paid work. This is pivotal to enabling carers' social, community and economic participation, and greater outcomes for community and government.
  - » Identify what data is needed to monitor the social and economic impact of national carer policies and programs.
3. That Government strengthen the Carer Recognition Act into a rights-based Act, where the current Act is not binding on any other Act and:
  - » Develop a Carer Impact Statement to inform future policies and decisions, and ensure carers are seen as partners in care in social and health services.
  - » Strengthen compliance and reporting requirements within Government and have the Australian Public Service Commission to review APS Employment Principles and workplace policies and practices against obligations under the Act in order to provide best practice examples for non-public service care agencies and non-government employers.



## Advocacy and navigation support for carers

**Carers need increased support as the hidden 'care coordinators', to enable their significant role in coordinating, negotiating and managing care across complex sectors and systems.**

1. That Government fund Carers Australia and the National Carer Network to work with the Commissioner for Carers and provide rights-based independent and confidential advocacy services to carers, involving:

- » Family and relationship services which better recognise the role of carers providing individual advocacy on behalf of, and with people receiving care.
- » Assist for carers to understand and exercise their rights.
- » Raise and address issues relating to accessing and interacting with Commonwealth funded services for themselves and/or the person they are caring for including aged care, disability, mental health and social services, noting carers may have multiple care relationships and interact with more than one sector.
- » Assist with sector navigation, including digital health literacy and access support.
- » Work in partnership with Carer Gateway Providers to improve cross sector and system navigation issues.



## ABOUT CARERS AUSTRALIA

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing the diversity of the 2.65 million 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.

In collaboration with our members, the peak carer organisations in each state and territory, we collectively form the National Carer Network and are an established infrastructure that represent the views of carers at the national level.

Our vision is an Australia that values and supports all carers, where all carers should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family, social and community life, employment and education.

This includes carers:

- » Who have their own care needs
- » Who are in multiple care relationships
- » Who have employment and/or education commitments
- » Aged under 25 years (young carers)
- » Aged over 65 years, including 'grandparent carers'
- » From culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- » Who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- » Who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTIQ+)
- » Who are living in rural and remote Australia, and/or
- » Who are no longer in a caring role (former carers).

Carers Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities as the traditional custodians of the land we work on and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. As an inclusive organisation we celebrate people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.