



Queensland Carers Action Plan

2023 – 2024

Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and Elders of the lands and seas on which we meet, live, learn and work.

We acknowledge those of the past, the ancestors whose strength has nurtured this land and its people, and who have passed on their wisdom.

We acknowledge those of the present for their leadership and ongoing efforts to protect and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

We acknowledge those of the future, the Elders not yet born, who will inherit the legacy of our efforts.

We recognise it is our collective efforts, and responsibility as individuals, communities and governments, to ensure equality, recognition and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life.

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Minister's message

As the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Seniors and Disability Services, I see the extraordinary contribution that carers make to the lives of the people they care for – and to communities as a whole. Their social and economic contribution is profound.

Carers come from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds. There are more than 533,000 Queenslanders providing long-term, unpaid care for someone with disability, a long-term health condition or frailty associated with age. That means that one in every nine Queenslanders is a carer.

Carers are integral to the Government's vision

“...one in every nine Queenslanders is a carer.”

for Queensland's communities to support and empower every person to connect, participate, contribute and thrive. Strong communities are essential to economic prosperity, wellbeing and future opportunities.

While some carers are connected and thriving, others may struggle with feeling isolated or lonely, lacking the critical connections, support and opportunities they need.

By recognising, supporting and providing opportunities for carers, we can work toward a Queensland that provides them with equity, access and participation. It is an investment in Queensland's future.

I invite and encourage business, industry, all levels of government and communities to be aware of carers and their unique needs – to make sure they can fulfil their potential as equal members of our community.

I am responsible for the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008 (the Act)* including the Queensland Carers Charter (the Charter), which recognises unpaid carers and the important contribution they make to the community.

Together we can build an inclusive Queensland community – one that respects, supports and empowers every carer to connect, participate, contribute, and thrive.

Queensland carers – who they are and why they are important

There are 533,000 Queenslanders providing unpaid care or assistance to another person who needs help with everyday tasks*. Carers may be, for example:

- an adult caring for another person because of frailty, disability, mental illness, chronic or terminal illness
- a parent caring for a child beyond the usual parent role
- a young person (up to 25 years of age) caring for, or involved in the care of a parent, grandparent, sibling or other relative. Teenagers, and even young children can be informal carers
- a grandparent who is the primary caregiver for their grandchild because their parents are unable to take care of them.

All carers, young and old, make a significant contribution to the people they care for, and their effort and dedication benefits the economic and social wellbeing of the whole community.

The responsibility of caring for another person can be satisfying, but the responsibility can impact the ability of a carer in some areas of their life. Socialising, financial security, as well as other opportunities that were once part of everyday life can be diminished because of the challenges involved in caring. Studies show that carers may experience lower wellbeing, higher psychological distress and poorer physical health.

For the one in nine Queenslanders who identify as carers, there are significant opportunity costs associated with the need to provide care.

Many don't recognise themselves as carers. Many see it as their role and responsibility to care as part of a family and community. Carers' needs are different to the needs of the people for whom they care.

Carers face a significant opportunity cost in their lifetimes, through reduced earnings and lower retirement incomes, according to the Queensland Carers Advisory Council, which provides advice to the Minister on issues and concerns, as well as policy, programs and services for carers.

It is estimated that the economic value of care provided by informal carers in Australia was \$77.9 billion in 2020. The lost earnings of informal carers that had to partially or fully withdraw from the workforce to provide care was estimated at \$15.2 billion (Deloitte Access Economics 2020).

“...value of care provided by informal carers in Australia was \$77.9 billion in 2020.”

As the population continues to age, the need for informal care is expected to increase. However, the corresponding supply of carers is not expected to keep up with demand, resulting in a significant gap by 2030 (Deloitte Access Economics 2020)

It is important that all carers, including young and grandparent carers, are aware of the resources and supports available and receive greater recognition and effective support for their role.

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring carers are valued, supported, and free from discrimination.

*While foster and kinship carers make a significant contribution to the lives of children and young people in care, they are not included in this Carers Action Plan.

Carers snapshot

533,000
unpaid carers

There are more than 533,000 Queenslanders providing long-term unpaid care for someone with a disability, a long-term health condition or who is frail and ageing

(Source: Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers T31.1).



\$77.9 billion
unpaid care value

In 2020, if unpaid care was replaced by paid care, informal care would be valued at \$77.9 billion in Australia

(Deloitte Access Economics 2020).

One in 9
Queenslanders
are carers

Approximately one in nine Queenslanders provide care for another person (or persons).



\$57,300
per year

For every year someone is a primary carer, they lose on average \$17,700 in superannuation and \$39,600 in lifetime earnings

(Carers Australia 2022).

14,039
Grandparent families

There are 14,039 grandparent families* in Queensland (2021 Census).

*Grandparent families are recognised where there is a grandparent-grandchild relationship in a family and no parent-child relationship.

\$175,000
superannuation

By age 67, primary carers will lose \$175,000 in superannuation and \$392,500 in lifetime earnings.

One in 20
young people
are carers

One in 20 young people aged 15 to 24 are carers.

Young carers:

- are overrepresented among females and culturally and linguistically diverse groups
- mostly care for a parent, grandparent or sibling
- report a range of physical and mental health impacts resulting from their caring responsibilities
- do not know what services are available to assist them
- can have their schooling impacted
- can have limited availability for work

(Hutchings et al. 2021).



Queensland Carers Advisory Council

The Queensland Government recognises the value of having people with lived experience provide expert advice on how policy, programs and services can better meet the needs of carers.

The Queensland Carers Advisory Council (the Advisory Council) was established in 2009 under the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008 (the Act)* to ensure the perspectives of carers on a wide range of issues are represented, informing the work of Government, as well as recognising the valuable contribution of carers for the people they care for.

Each term of the Advisory Council runs for two years and consists of 12 members who:

- are carers (4 members including 1 grandparent carer)
- represent organisations that work with carers (4)
- represent Government departments that have an interest in carers (4).

Links to other Government initiatives

This action plan is informed by, and has strong connections with, other Government initiatives as outlined below.

The [Communities 2032 Strategy](#) is Queensland's first long-term, holistic strategy for our communities. It will guide Queensland Government action over 10 years towards a vision that Queensland's communities support and empower every person to connect, participate, contribute and thrive.

The [Human Rights Act 2019](#) protects and promotes Human Rights. All carers should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians, regardless of age, race, sex, disability, sexuality, religious or political beliefs, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage, cultural or linguistic differences, socioeconomic status or location.

[Queensland's Disability Plan 2022-27](#) is the Queensland Government's plan to build the inclusion of Queenslanders with disability and is integral to the experience of carers.

The findings of the [Inquiry into Social Isolation and Loneliness in Queensland](#) in 2021 have resulted in new approaches and initiatives to prevent, mitigate and address social isolation and loneliness.

[Future Directions for an Age-Friendly Queensland](#) is the Queensland Government's commitment to creating age-friendly communities in which older people feel connected, cared for and can contribute in ways of their choosing.



Engaging carers

The Government has been listening to carers to identify gaps in services and supports through a number of mechanisms including:

- advice from the Queensland Carers Advisory Council
- Carers Queensland facilitated focus groups and conversations with carers known as ‘Kitchen table conversations’
- insights drawn from:
 - » [Caring Costs Us: the economic impact on lifetime income and retirement savings of information Carers, Summary of Findings, March 2022](#), Carers Australia
 - » [Caring for others and yourself, 2022 Carer Wellbeing Survey](#), Carers Australia and University of Canberra
 - » [The value of informal care in 2020](#), Deloitte Access Economics
 - » **Working for Queensland Survey**, unpublished, Public Service Commission
 - » [Young Carers in Australia Project 2021: A summary of key findings and recommendations](#), Hutchings et al.
 - » **2021 Census of Population and Housing**, Australian Bureau of Statistics
 - » **2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers**, Australian Bureau of Statistics

Key insights are:

- » Carers must be involved in determining their own journey.
- » Many carers are unaware of existing services that can assist them in their caring role.
- » Carers need to be involved in policy formulation and review by government and non-government organisations, to ensure that services continue to align with their needs.
- » Services for carers need to be better integrated to ensure ease of accessibility.
- » Consideration must be given to the unique needs of different cohorts of carers including: young carers, grandparent carers, First Nations carers, culturally and linguistically diverse carers, LGBTQIA+ carers, working carers, carers with disability and older carers.
- » Young carers face difficulties, particularly relating to education and training as a result of their care responsibilities.
- » There is a need to improve identification of young carers, to increase and improve access to support services.
- » There is a need to increase awareness of young carer issues within the community.
- » Grandparent carers need assistance to access appropriate supports.
- » Carers face an opportunity cost over their lifetime, through reduced earnings and lower retirement incomes.
- » Culturally and linguistically diverse carers need to be better targeted to assist identification as a carer, and to navigate and access services.
- » Carers face social isolation that can lead to other mental and physical health problems.
- » Investing in carers, through increased support and services, will result in social and economic returns.
- » There is a need for all workplaces to provide support for carers through flexible work arrangements, recognising the principles of the Queensland Carers Charter.
- » There is a need to raise awareness of the economic and social value of carers.
- » Parts of the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008* and the Queensland Carers Charter are no longer relevant.

Queensland Carers Advisory Council (QCAC) priorities

QCAC has developed a work plan based on three priority areas:

1. Recognising and raising awareness of the value of carers in our community.
2. Improving carer wellbeing by ensuring access to services that meet the needs of carers.
3. Promoting the principles of the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008* and the Queensland Carers Charter.

Priority Area 1: Recognising and raising awareness of the value of carers in our community

Rationale

Carers deserve to be recognised and acknowledged for the valuable contribution they make to their families, our communities and our economy.

QCAC will continue to work with the Queensland Government, their carer networks and the community to raise awareness of carers' experiences, rights, needs and aspirations so there is improved understanding and better support in the community.

Actions

1.4 Highlight National Carers Week

QCAC will work with the Queensland Government to continue to support National Carers Week as an annual event that recognises and celebrates carers. Carers Week is an important opportunity to recognise, celebrate and raise awareness among all Queenslanders about the diversity of carers and their caring roles.

1.5 Raise public awareness of carers

QCAC is working with the Queensland Government to develop promotional activity in 2023 that will:

- raise awareness of the diversity of Carers, the people they care for and different ways of caring, including the economic and social value of carers and their need for school and/or workplace support
- raise awareness of existing services for carers

- encourage young people to identify as carers, so they can access support services
- develop inclusive resources in a number of languages for culturally and linguistically diverse people
- encourage grandparent carers to access supports and services.

The above-mentioned carer cohorts are the priority for raising awareness during this term of QCAC. Future councils may focus on other cohorts.

1.6 Promote the Carer Business Discount Card and Companion Card

The Queensland Government's Carer Business Discount Card provides benefits to around 17,000 carers across Queensland. The Carers Business Discount Card helps to ease cost of living pressures by providing a range of discounts on goods and services for carers at over 4,000 participating business outlets across the state.

The Companion Card entitles card holders to a second 'companion' ticket at no charge at participating venues and on public transport. People who have a disability and a lifelong need for attendant care support are eligible for the Companion Card. There are over 30,000 Companion Card holders and 844 affiliates in Queensland.

QCAC will partner with the Queensland Government to ensure the Carer Business Discount Card and Companion Card are promoted to businesses to increase the number of businesses providing discounts, and to carers to improve take-up of the cards to assist with the cost of living.

1.7 Highlight Grandparents Day

Grandparents Day is an annual celebration of grandparents, grand-friends, relatives, and those who play a grandparent role in our family or community.

In 2023, QCAC will work with the Queensland Government to promote Grandparents Day widely across the State, including at schools, in community and shopping centres, and public libraries.

1.8 Valuing grandparent carers

QCAC is focused on recognising the value and unique contribution of grandparent carers, who after having raised their own children are now the primary care-giver and decision-maker for their grandchild(ren).

Priority Area 2: Improving carer wellbeing by ensuring access to services that meet the needs of Carers

Rationale

The Queensland Carers Charter establishes that carers should be recognised for their unique knowledge and experience and as individuals with their own needs.

Carers often report experiencing social isolation as well as physical and mental stresses. QCAC is working with the Queensland Government to provide advice on the types of supports that will enhance carer wellbeing.

Actions

2.1 Social Isolation

There are over 140 [neighbourhood and community centres](#) across Queensland where carers can find connection, belonging, participation and inclusion.

The Queensland Government also provides \$3.7 million annually to support specialist [seniors social isolation services](#) across the state. Seniors and carers can join a wide range of activities in their local communities, or just enjoy a morning tea and each other's company.

QCAC will work with the Queensland Government to consider work and research in other jurisdictions on social isolation and loneliness as they relate to carers.

2.2 Time for Grandparents program

The Queensland Government invests nearly \$1 million each year in the [Time for Grandparents](#) program run by UnitingCare Communities to provide grandparents who are primary carers for their grandchildren with respite through access to free day activities and camps.

QCAC will provide advice on possible improvements to enhance the Time for Grandparents program and outcomes for grandparent carers.

2.3 Services and supports

QCAC will continue to provide advice to the Queensland Government about the needs of carers and gaps in service delivery that impact on carers, including services for grandparent carers, carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, First Nations carers and young carers.

This includes developing resources to assist grandparent carers to access supports and services and targeting young carers through an awareness campaign.

2.4 Guide for health professionals

QCAC will inform the development of a practical guide that provides tips for clinicians, general practitioners, and other services in Queensland on engaging carers, families, and kin in a person's care. The product is intended as an easy-to-use guide that assists stakeholders to talk about issues such as consent and including families, communication techniques, concepts of trauma informed care, understanding carer and family needs and communication and managing conflict.

Priority Area 3: Promoting the principles of the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008* and the Queensland Carers Charter

Rationale

The *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008 (the Act)* and the Queensland Carers Charter (the Charter) recognise the valuable contribution of carers to the people they care for, the economic and social benefit they provide and that the interests of carers need to be considered in decisions about the services they access.

One of QCAC's key roles is to make recommendations to the Minister on enhancing compliance by public authorities with the Charter.

Actions

3.5 Workplace carer support

QCAC will provide advice to the Queensland Government on embedding the principles of the Queensland Carers Charter in services affecting carers and the people they care for, and workforce strategies to support staff who are carers.

3.6 Provide advice on the scope of the Act and the Charter

QCAC will consider the scope of the Act and the Charter to ensure they remain current and relevant. The Council will explore whether a rights-based framework for the needs of carers is preferred.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census of Population and Housing

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

Carers Australia (2022) [Caring Costs Us: the economic impact on lifetime income and retirement savings of information Carers, Summary of Findings, March 2022](#)

Carers Australia and University of Canberra (2022) [Caring for others and yourself, 2022 Carer Wellbeing Survey](#)

Deloitte Access Economics (2020), [The value of informal care in 2020](#)

Public Service Commission (2023) unpublished, 2022 Working for Queensland Survey

Hutchings K, Radford K, Harris N, McMillan S, Slattery M, Spencer N, Wheeler A (2021) [Young Carers in Australia Project 2021: A summary of key findings and recommendations](#), Griffith University, Arafmi Limited

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