



**Carers Queensland Ltd. submission to:  
National Financial Literacy  
Strategy Consultation  
October 2017**

**AN AUSTRALIA THAT VALUES AND SUPPORT ALL CARERS**

**Submission Title:** Submission to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission  
National Financial Literacy Strategy Consultation October 2017

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**CARERS QUEENSLAND LTD.**

Family and friend carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic medical condition, terminal illness or are frail aged.

The activity and impact of providing care is best understood in terms of its context; as a relationship between two or more individuals, rooted in family, friendship or community. Caring is a role rarely chosen by most, nor does it discriminate. Children and young people, people of working age and older people, people with disability, people who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse, indigenous Australians, people with diverse bodies, genders, relationships and sexualities and those living in rural and remote Queensland provide care to a family member or friends on a daily basis. For some caring is a short-term commitment whilst for others, it is a role that literally lasts a lifetime.

Carers Queensland Ltd. is the peak body representing the diverse concerns, needs and interests of carers in Queensland. Carers Queensland believes that all carers regardless of their age, disability, gender identification or expression, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, geographical location or their cultural and linguistic differences should have the same rights, choices and opportunities and be able to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family and community life, employment and education like other citizens of the State. Carers Queensland's mission is to improve the quality of life of all carers throughout Queensland.

We believe we are in a unique position to advocate on behalf of the 474,400 carers living in Queensland. We aspire to provide an independent platform from which to advance the issues and concerns of carers and believe our knowledge and expertise in carer issues means that we are able to provide the Government and industry with relevant and trusted information that will ensure that the needs of carers will be recognised, respected and acted upon. Our ambition is to ensure that carers are recognised and included as active partners in the development of government health and social policy, legislation and service delivery practices.

Our submission is informed by national and international peer reviewed data, our own experience as a service provider and the personal and often difficult admissions of carers, those people who provide unpaid care and support to the most vulnerable in our society – children, adults and older people with disability, mental health problems, life-limiting illnesses, cognitive impairment and challenging behaviours.

## INTRODUCTION

Carers Queensland commends the Australian Securities and Investments Commission for consulting broadly on the development of the 2018 Strategy.

## RESPONSES

**Proposal 1:** Carers Queensland supports the proposal to change the language from *financial literacy* to *financial capability*.

**Proposal 2:** Carers Queensland supports the proposal to extend the strategy timeframe to 10 years with a review at 5 years or as appropriate.

**Proposal 3:** Carers Queensland supports the proposed emphasis on managing money day-to-day; planning for the future; and making informed decisions.

### Discussion Issue 1:

We appreciate the imperative for the general population to have greater financial capability, of having the knowledge to make prudent financial choices, plan for the future and have the capacity to manage the unexpected. However, many carers, as the data below attests, live in constant financial distress that cannot be alleviated by greater financial literacy evidenced by more knowledge, better choices or changed behaviours.

Carers Queensland respectfully requests that the 2018 Strategy include family and friend carers as one of the priority audiences and offer the following data to support our request.

- a. Australian research shows that, at the aggregate level, carers experience a higher rate of poverty on all measures. Carers who have been caring for two years or more, single parent carers and carers of more than two people have higher poverty rates than non-carers and are more likely to be living in persistent poverty. In households where the primary income earner is in receipt of the Carers Payment 24% live below the poverty line.
- b. The Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2015 data indicates that 144,700 carers in Queensland live in a household where the gross equivalised income is in the lowest 20% (87,200 carers of working age and 37,500 carers aged 65 years and over). In our 2017 Quality of Life Survey, 50% of our survey respondents live in a household where the combined income is less than \$40,000 per year.
- c. In order to manage financially many carers incur expensive debts which ultimately traps them in a vicious cycle of debt dependency. In a 2013 survey conducted by Carers Queensland, 85% of respondents struggle to make ends meet on a regular basis and some are reliant on payday and fringe lenders at least once or twice a year while

a small cohort use them more than three times in a year. The dependency on microfinance is evidenced by the continuing demand for No Interest Loans<sup>®</sup> provided by Carers Queensland.

- d. Carers generally experience lower than average rates of employment. In 2015, 48% of carers of working age in Queensland were employed, just slightly less than the national figure. Primary carers however experience much higher rates of part time employment than secondary carers and a lower income.
- e. While some carers are able to successfully balance employment with their caring responsibilities and have sufficient money to meet their ordinary needs, there is insufficient income to meet their disability related costs; an unexpected event or to plan and save for tomorrow.

#### **Discussion Issue 2:**

Carers Queensland respectfully suggests that the Commission continue to work collaboratively with:

- a. The Good Shepherd and Financial Counselling Australia to:
  - ensure the timely exchange of valuable data to inform the strategy implementation, review and evaluation processes
- b. Academics and researchers to:
  - conduct research in the efficacy of the National Strategy and other financial support services (such as financial counselling) and
  - represent the needs of the financial support sector to the vocational and tertiary education sectors, ensuring the curriculum remains current so that future graduates have a knowledge of this subject area

**Discussion Issue 3:**

Carers Queensland respectfully suggests that the Strategy:

- a. Recognise that a significant proportion of Australian are illiterate and/or innumerate (<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/2013-09-22/4962902>), many of whom will have reduced capacity to utilise mainstream financial educational resources and, as a consequence, are at a heightened risk of poor decision making and/or exposure to financial abuse
- b. Addresses the issue of financial abuse of vulnerable people by creating opportunities within the strategy for collaboration between the:
  - Good Shepherd and the State based financial counselling associations to develop resources and toolkits to assist vulnerable clients (including those who are functionally illiterate and/or innumerate) to reduce the likelihood of being targeted by 'scammers' and implement financial safeguarding measures to reduce the potential for future fraudulent behaviour (see bibliography reference for Social Care Institute for Excellence. (2011). *Assessment: Financial crime against vulnerable adults*) and
  - Peak counselling agencies to develop support programs to enable victims to address the stress and shame experienced because of the financial abuse.
- b. Adopt a multidimensional approach that shifts the focus from the individual citizen to the structural and social contexts that enable or restrain wellbeing.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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