

# **SUBMISSION**

**2024-25 Queensland Budget Submission**

<b>Submission Title:</b>	2024-25 Queensland Budget Submission
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## CARERS QUEENSLAND

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, First Nations Australians, people with diverse bodies, genders, relationships, and sexualities and those living in rural and remote Queensland provide care to family members or friends daily. For some caring is a short-term commitment whilst for others, it is a role that literally lasts a lifetime.

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. Carers come from all walks of life.

Carers Queensland is the peak body representing the diverse concerns, needs and interests of caring families in Queensland. Carers Queensland believes that all carers regardless of their age, disability, gender or gender 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. Carers Queensland's mission is to improve the quality of life of all carers throughout Queensland.

We aspire to provide an independent platform from which to advance the issues and concerns of the 533,200 carers in Queensland and believe our knowledge and expertise in carer issues means we can provide the Government with relevant and trusted information that will ensure that the needs of carers will be recognised, respected, and acted on.

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.

## Introduction

Queensland is home to approximately 533,200 individuals who provide care and support to family and friends; however, they receive little recognition, awareness, or support to fulfil this rewarding, valuable yet stressful and at times very difficult role. Carers provide care because they want to or feel a sense of responsibility towards their loved ones, but it has been well established by academic research that carers, because of their caring obligations experience one of the lowest levels of health and wellbeing of any population cohort within Australia, and frequently feel isolated and lonely, with poor financial security.

Carers Queensland believes that caring is a shared responsibility of government, community and that community-based services, including government agencies, have a civil responsibility to provide carers with access to the support and resources necessary to enable them to fulfil their role, while maintaining their own sense of well-being, financial and employment security and social connections.

## Discussion

### Government Initiated and Led Carer Strategy

Citizens of the state, carers are entitled to the same social and financial inclusion as others and Carers Queensland believes that this can be effectively facilitated and supported by a whole of government carer strategy. Sadly, since the last whole of government strategy ended in 2014 there has been a reduction in carer specific funding, leaving some carers in difficulty, particularly as a result of the current 'cost-of-living' crisis. Carers in Queensland, require more assistance to enable them to fulfil their role both within and out with the home. A whole of government carer strategy would provide a coordinated approach to carer recognition and inclusion, supporting but not encroaching on the remit of the Carer Gateway and coordination and improve responsibility and accountability for carer support.

Carers Queensland strongly advocates a whole of government carer strategy is required and includes the following:

- Develop an implementation plan that addresses carers rights and needs, both together and separately from the person they provide care for
- Develop a carer impact statement, and review the Carer (Recognition) Act 2008 inclusive of the Carer Charter to ensure these are rights based and will inform future policies and decisions and ensure carers receive recognition and respect as partners in care
- Provide a framework for coordination of carer policy and decision making
- Monitor implementation, outcomes, and the impact of carer strategies
- Consider data gaps and the existing limited research on carers, particularly young carers, CALD and grandparent carers, and the resultant impact this has on the development of evidence-based health, aged care, disability support and social policy and service planning

## Recognition and Carer Consultation

The *Carer Recognition Act 2008* (QLD) is one the oldest carer recognition acts in Australia. Not reviewed since 2008 and not supported by a whole-of-government carer strategy, the Act is outdated and is perceived by many carers as irrelevant as it fails to drive carer respect and inclusivity. While delivering a well-intentioned Carers Charter, the Act does not bestow any real or tangible rights to carers, nor does it provide any basis for carers to insist that their on their rights are respected and acted upon by Queensland Government agencies.

Carers Queensland appreciates that a review of the Act has commenced. We request the government consider a broad consultation process that involves carers from across the state during the pre and post draft stages. We believe that a robust consultation will ensure the revised Act has real world applicability and impact, facilitating genuine and consistent inclusivity in all areas of society.

We recommended the following stages of consultation be considered in this budget round:

- Carers Recognition Act revision is included in the budget to enable consultation with a large sample of carers including young carers, rural and remote, CALD, working carers, grandparent carers, and those from diverse backgrounds.
- Consultation will need to be a multi-step process, and this should be accounted for.

## Awareness, Media Portrayal and Perception of Queensland Carers

Caring for a friend or family member is stigmatized within Australian society. This stigma is further heightened in government agencies, educational, health and medical facilities across Queensland, often by the choice of promotional material and information leaflets found in these areas.

Carers advise that in most public areas (e.g., hospital, educational and other State Government facilities) charters (e.g., Carer Charters) stating their right to feel welcome, respected, valued, and safe are not displayed, and nor are carers reflected in any leaflets or posters. The only exception to this is the promotion of material relating to elder abuse, which frequently portrays the family carer as being the perpetrator. This maligning and biased representation not only sends the message to carers that they are not valued or respected but portrays to the visiting public that all carers perpetrate harm or exploitation.

The psychological theory of place attachment describes an emotional bond between an individual and an environment, in which the level of safety and attachment an individual feels is a significant predictor of how a person will act in that environment.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the positive representation of carers in government offices, educational and health and medical settings is essential to enable the fulfillment of the caring role. Carers deserve to feel psychologically safe, trusted and valued within these environments, and this begins with mandating the way in which carers are to be represented and recognised in public agencies. The development of a carers charter, entrenching carers rights and the implementation of this charter in local government and health settings.

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<sup>1</sup> Inalhan, Goksenin & Yang, Eunhwa & Weber, Clara. (2021). Place Attachment Theory

- Carers Queensland recommends the Government develop a positive media and education campaign of carers (who are carers? What carers do and how carers support the health and social care economy) utilising all communication forms, including those for people of limited literacy and numeracy.

### Queensland Education System and Young Carers

Children and young people from caring families face many unique challenges many of which are often unrecognised or dismissed, with little to no support measure being put into place to assist them to succeed in life. Recently, carers of school aged children have advised that the school attended by their children have failed to listen to and hear and act on their concerns about their child's need for additional assistance and support.<sup>2</sup> Australian research repeatedly shows that children and young adults who provide care are often less engaged in their education, require additional supports at school, are unable to complete homework, and generally feel less safe at school than their counterparts.<sup>3</sup> This has a significant detrimental impact on their social and education outcomes, limiting their future opportunities in higher and further education and employment. These children are not being provided with any additional supports in the classroom or any understanding of why homework etc. may not be completed in time. Instead, these children are far more likely than their non-caring counterparts to fall behind in their education, resulting in lower educational, employment and socio-economic outcomes.

Further to this, some children with disability are not well supported in Queensland schools, particularly those with difficult behaviour because of their disability. Anecdotally, we understand that children with disability-related difficult behaviours are likely to be excluded from school as a result of this behaviour. This type of exclusionary discipline has a profoundly serious and potentially longer-term negative impact on the child and the parents and caring families. We have been advised by carers with children at school, that they have been informed that they must be within a fifteen-minute radius of the school at all times so that they can collect their child at short notice, while others have been contacted multiple times per week to collect their child, making it impossible to have a successful work life. This has a serious impact upon a carer's ability to attain and maintain employment and has both short- and long-term consequences of the child, and their siblings, financially, socially and in education and employment. This is an area which must be looked at in more depth with viable resources deployed to schools to enable this cohort of children to remain in school receiving appropriate education alongside their peers and enabling the carers and family to participate fully in society.

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<sup>2</sup> Moore, Tim & McArthur, Morag & Morrow, Ros. (2009). Attendance, Achievement and Participation: Young Carers' Experiences of School in Australia. *Australian Journal of Education*. 53. 5-18.

<sup>3</sup> The Conversation, *One in 10 Aussie kids care for someone with a disability or drug dependence*, 2019

## Recommendations

In summary, Carers Queensland recommends the following:

- The development and implementation of a state based whole of government carer strategy
- Consultation in the development and revision of the *Carer Recognition Act 2008*
- Public awareness campaigns highlighting who carers are, what they do, and the value and necessity of this role in Queensland society
- Resources and research conducted to enable young carers to receive the same primary and secondary education as their non-caring peers
- Research, resources and system in place to reduce the amount of exclusionary discipline experienced by children with a disability in Queensland primary and secondary schools