

# IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CARERS

ANNUAL REPORT  
2014/15





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Here is my caree Max, who suffers from Alzheimer’s disease, at Yorkies Knob Beach, where we went for a walk and a drink at the yacht club afterwards. It was a very cold day for Cairns, but it was very relaxing and enjoyable. Max enjoyed his glass of red after the walk.

**Nisha Shahid**

Photography: Nisha Shahid

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Carers Queensland is the peak body representing and advocating on behalf of almost 500,000 Queensland carers. Our mission is to improve the quality of life of all unpaid family carers throughout Queensland.

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This year, we asked carers in Queensland to submit a photograph that demonstrated their life as a carer. We are pleased to share some of these stunning photographs with you in this annual report.

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Acknowledgments

# Foreword

It is with pleasure I commend the Carers Queensland Annual Report for the financial year ending 2015.

On behalf of the Carers Queensland Board of Governance, I would like to particularly thank the Chief Executive, senior staff and management and our wonderful employees and volunteers for continuing to deliver our programs to the same rigorous standard we have always achieved whilst maintaining a sound financial position for the organisation.

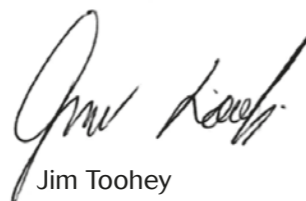
The Board of Governance and senior management have embarked on new strategies to ensure Carers Queensland remains on a sustainable financial basis into the future because we understand how critical the programs the organisation delivers are to carers and in turn to those they care for.

These programs which align with Carers Queensland mission and values, will generate income to support other programs impacted by the funding restrictions affecting the community sector generally and despite

this, will be delivered to exactly the same quality and efficiency standards as those in our past.

In the years ahead, Carers Queensland will remain a proud and confident deliverer of advocacy, support and care for carers because we recognise the enormous contribution they make to our society financially and in terms of the quality of life for those they care for.

It is to the credit of the organisation that after a period of careful reflection, it has had the courage to embrace new models with the resolve to ensure these will help us to better reflect the needs and issues of importance of carers to the wider community.



Jim Toohey  
President,  
Carers Queensland Inc.

Welcome to the 2014/2015 Annual Review of Carers Queensland's activities.

And what a year it was! So many reforms happening, our heads were spinning and I have no doubt that for carers and the person they are caring for, it is been difficult to keep up with all the new changes.

We go into the next financial year with the My Aged Care Gateway, the new Commonwealth Home Support Service, (vale HACC), Regional Assessment Services, the early launch of the NDIS in Townsville, Charters Towers and Palm Island, and the planned introduction of a National Carer Gateway. Very exciting times and we will be here to support caring families through the many changes these programs will bring.

The Board of Governance and senior management have embarked on new strategies to ensure Carers Queensland remains on a sustainable financial basis into the future.

But first, some of the highlights from 2014/2015, with a heartfelt thank you to all of the staff of Carers Queensland. 69% of our staff are either current or past carers.

All of our staff truly believe in the work that they do, and always strive to have a positive impact on your journey.

- 351 children assisted with early intervention therapies in the Better Start program
- Specialist support and counselling to 521 young carers; plus 40 of Queensland's young carers received a bursary as part of the Australian Government's Young Carer Bursary program
- 4588 counselling sessions to 1258 carers
- 5560 calls answered by our Carer Advisory Service staff
- The provision of 5138 hours of assistance to culturally and linguistically diverse clients

- Support groups provided across the state for 5500 carers 366 carers supported each other through Friends Care Online – a closed Facebook site for carers
- 87 carers commenced their Certificate III in Community Services Work throughout the State via our Registered Training Organisation, and 100% of those who graduated from our Certificate III in Aged Care secured employment
- 84% of our staff have participated in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples cultural awareness training
- We provided 295 no interest loans to the value of \$299,600 with 18.24% of loans being for vehicle repairs
- We provided NDIS Participant Readiness workshops to carers and service providers
- 67 secondary students with disability were assisted to plan for their future post high school
- We managed the funding package for 60 persons with a disability through the Your Life Your Choice program

- We assisted families with their guardianship issues by attending and supporting them at 114 Queensland Civil & Administrative Tribunal hearings

I hope you enjoy reading the stories from some of those families we have assisted, throughout this report, and we look forward to supporting our clients and caring families over the coming year.



Debra Cottrell  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Carers Queensland Inc.

## Our mission

To improve the quality of life of all carers throughout Queensland.

## Our vision

An Australia that values and supports carers..

## Our purpose

- We work to:
- improve the health, wellbeing, resilience and financial security of carers.
  - ensure that caring is a shared responsibility of family, community and Government.

## Values/principles

We are forward thinking and innovative and we value:

- respect and dignity
- equity and diversity
- honesty and confidentiality
- integrity and accountability
- empathy and compassion
- courage and fortitude



03



This picture embodies how my son has taught me to live my role as his carer; with eyes closed tight, smile on our faces, as the waves wash over us. Then laughing as we find the joy in getting back up and doing it all again.

Natasa Kalocsai

# Empowering carers

## Better Start Program

This year we registered 351 children on to the Better Start program. Our Better Start team co-ordinated Moving Forwards workshops which gives families the opportunities to meet with agencies such as Disability services and allied health practitioners to explore options and opportunities for their child now and in the future.

I could not have done all of this without the expertise and brilliance of our Better Start RIS advisor. She was able to open up options for us that we didn't know existed. She encouraged us to seek the best for our daughter and helped create a better vision of what we wanted for her life.

## Young Carers

During the year Carers Queensland provided specialist support and assistance to 521 young carers. This included 377 sessions of specialist counselling support provided by the Young Carer counsellor. We're pleased to report that we achieved a 10% increase in contacts with young adult carers (19-25 years) and a 15% increase in ongoing contact with young carers in rural and remote Queensland.

## Counselling Service

The Counselling Service provided 4,588 counselling sessions to 1,258 carers during the year.

## Specialist Mental Health Counselling Service

Operating through the Brisbane North and the Brisbane South offices, our Mental Health Counselling Service supported over 200 carers of people with mental health problems, autism or intellectual disabilities this year.

## Carer Advisory Service

The first port of call for many carers seeking information, advice and emotional support, Carer Advisory Service assisted 5,560 callers during the year, a 1.60% increase on the previous year.

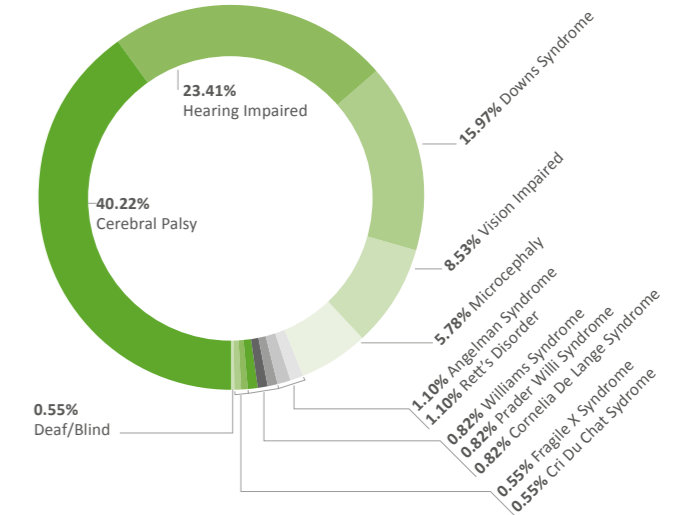
## Carer Liaison and Support

This year we provided over 40,000 hours of support and assistance to 7214 carers, including providing advice and direction on specific issues; liaising with other agencies; and assisting carers to access other services.

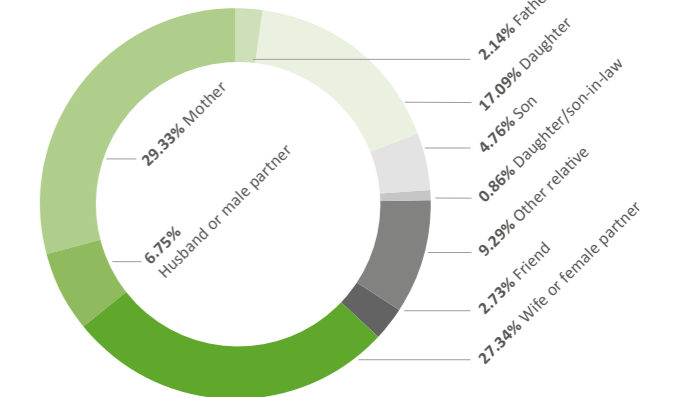
## Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD) Program

Our CALD program assists the carers of people who are frail aged, have a mental illness, chronic condition or have a disability and who also identify as culturally and linguistically diverse to access appropriate based community support services. In the last year 1268 clients received 5138 hours of assistance.

## Disability profile of children registered with Better Start in the year



## Who seeks counselling?



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# Inclusion

## Carer Support Groups

All our regional offices run regular carer support groups throughout the year. These groups enable carers to share information and advice, offer emotional support, learn new skills and to have valuable time-out. During the year over 5,500 carers attended one of our support groups.

## Friends Care Online

We created Friends Care Online, a closed Facebook group for carers, because we recognised that many carers feel isolated due to their caring role. This year, Friends Care Online has gone from strength to strength. We're seeing regular, supportive discussions between carers about all manner of carer issues, and are pleased to note that the group membership increased by 30% in the past 12 months to 366 carers.

 facebook.com/FriendsCareOnline

## Education and Training

As a registered training organisation, we are pleased that 84 carers enrolled to study their Certificate III in Community Services with us this year and will be gaining their qualification soon. Not only that, but 100% of the carers who enrolled in our Certificate III in Aged Care course graduated and secured employment in the Aged Care sector.

Caring for her elderly grandmother was an easy decision for Rhonnie Tant.

Rhonnie cared for her grandmother for 12 years, "but I'd never thought of what I'd actually gained from caring

"My grandmother raised me, so when her health deteriorated to such an extent that I kept having to take time off work to look after her, I knew it was time to care for her full time.

for my grandmother. It was only after she was gone, when I felt a real void in my life, that it occurred to me how fortunate my grandmother had been to be able to stay in her own home as she got older. It occurred to me that a lot of people don't have someone at home to care for them."

Rhonnie studied for her Certificate III Aged Care qualification with Carer Queensland. Her skills were soon recognised by a local aged care employer – she was hired in the middle of her work placement halfway through her course. She now has a permanent part time role.

"I was obviously destined to work in aged care," she says. "I love it, and I particularly love that I get to look after lots of grandmothers all the time!"

## Young Carer Bursaries

40 young carers in Queensland were successful in receiving an education bursary as part of the Australian Government's Young Carer Bursary program.

15 year old Maree, from West Gladstone, was one of the successful recipients. She lives at home with her mum, and her older brother Joseph. Joseph is 19, and he has autism. Maree has been helping to care for him for as long as she can remember.

"I guess you could say that I've been caring for Joseph my whole life," she says. "We have a good relationship. He used to go to school, but now he goes out and about during the day with a carer. At home I help mum to look after him. I make him happy. I help out mum around the house too. I mow the lawn, for example.

"Although caring for her brother is a big part of her life, Maree doesn't really mention it to other people. "I don't really talk to my friends about caring for Joseph. Only some of my friends know what I do, really," she says. "Those who do know about it think I've got a good handle on it."

Maree beat off 800 applicants to secure her bursary of \$4,000. She plans on using the money wisely. "I get \$1,000 a term, so the first thing I will buy is a laptop. I don't have a laptop at the moment, so I have to use the school's when I have to write up assignments. I enjoy school – maths, art, science. I can't pick a favourite subject really."



Photography: Laurinda Gardner

“

This is a picture of my mum I care for.

I love my mum.

Laurinda Gardner



“Introducing my mum and dad, aged 86, married for 63 years. Both frail aged, mum with Alzheimer’s Disease. Mum and dad love living (semi-independently) on their property. I do whatever is necessary to ensure they can live there happily and safely. My role contributes to their continued joy of life.

**Beth Cavallari**

Photography: Beth Cavallari

### LGBTI carers

Many carers who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex do not identify as a carer or seek help and support with their caring role. We need to do more to raise awareness of our services amongst these carers. This year, Carers Queensland, in partnership with the other state and territory carer associations, attended the Sydney Mardi Gras 2015 Fair Day, promoting the carer network and carer support services to the 70,000 attendees.

### Reconciliation Action Plan

Carers Queensland recognises the challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people and is committed to a vision of a reconciled Australia. Following the launch of our Reconciliation Action Plan last year, we are pleased to report: An increase in the number of carers who use our services

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander carers rose by **34.48%**

Aboriginal carers rose by **6.17%**

Torres Strait Islander carers rose by **84.61%**

**84%** of our employees have participated in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island peoples cultural awareness training

We launched an Education and Training Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, an Employment Strategy and a Procurement Strategy to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.

### No Interest Loans Scheme NILS®

The No Interest Loans Scheme or NILS® provides small interest free loans for those eligible carers who are wholly or partially excluded from mainstream financial services. For many carers securing a NILS® loan is the difference between being able to purchase a vital service or piece of equipment and struggling without.

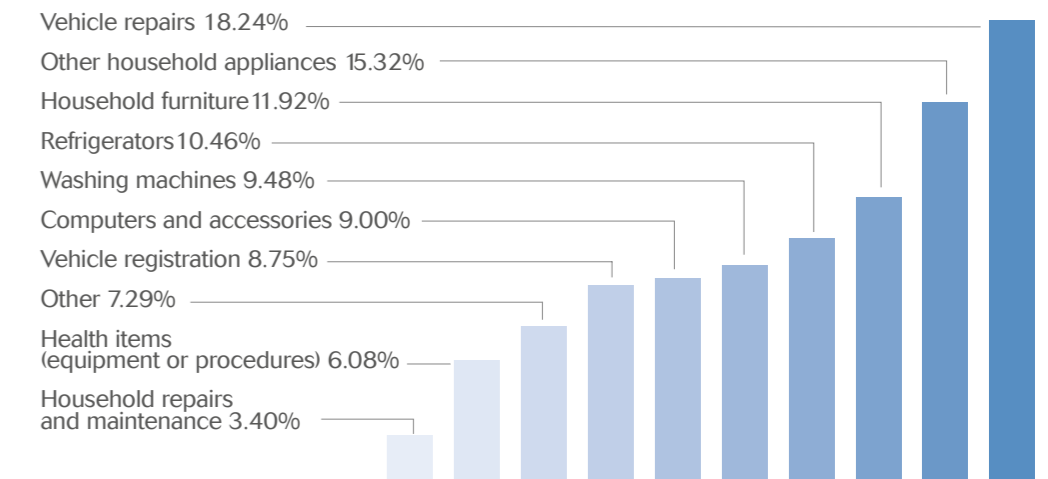
“NILS has assisted me in my ongoing (at times overwhelming) caring role, on multiple occasions. I have repaid three NILS loans and am close to repaying my fourth. My loans have been for medical equipment needs, eyeglasses and new whitegoods that I simply would not have been able to afford to purchase outright at the time. I provide full-time special care for one of my children. The much appreciated help I have received from NILS has contributed greatly to my ability to ‘keep it together’ as I juggle not only appointments, travels, general parenting responsibilities and life in general; but also my available finances, as well as my own physical, mental and emotional needs. I truly am grateful for the help NILS has afforded me.

We received **373** enquiries

and approved **295** loans

to a value of **\$299,600**

### What Carers Purchased with their NILS® loan



# Behind the scenes

## NDIS Participant Readiness Scheme

Our NDIS Participant Readiness Team has been busy helping older carers and service providers to prepare for the Queensland launch of the NDIS in 2016. Almost 200 carers have attended our NDIS Participant Readiness workshops to date with many attendees feeling significantly more prepared for the NDIS following the workshop.

“My mum attended yesterday’s workshop. Your workshop was so much more than just putting together and delivering an informative and engaging workshop. You have provided people like my mother with some peace of mind. That, to me, is a priceless gift.

I know that concerns about the future for my sister have weighed heavily upon her. There has been a cascading effect on my sister too, impacting upon the things we currently have in place both with work and social activities. It would not be unreasonable to say that the future looked rather bleak at times. After your workshop my mum felt positive about the future for the first time in many months.”

## My Future: My Life

Carers Queensland partnered with Centacare in 2014 to deliver My Future: My Life transition preparation planning to 67 students with disability in the Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Cairns areas.

My Future: My Life aims to support secondary students with a disability to plan and pursue a full, rich and inclusive

life after they finish high school. Students are given support to identify and articulate their goals and then a plan is put in to place to help achieve them.

Often the simple things can make the greatest difference to achieving post-school aspirations: one student has received My Future: My Life funding to purchase forklift training as part of his employment preparation plan whilst another has received funding to pay for a TAFE course and a support worker.

## Your Life Your Choice

Your Life Your Choice enables a person with disability and their carer to self-direct their State Government funds. As a Your Life Your Choice host provider, this year we have provided over 60 people and their carer with planning and administrative support.

Kate is the mother of 22 year old James, who has a genetic disorder known as MECP2 Duplication Syndrome. James lives in the family home, and has recently chosen to receive personalised funding through the Your Life Your Choice model.

“When we were initially offered the choice of self-directing James’ funding, we declined. We were happy with how James’ support was going and I felt that I had enough on my plate with caring for James, working part time and running a household.

“However, after attending a few information sessions, I changed my mind. I could see that changing would give us more flexibility with James’ funding, and that this could help him to live a meaningful life with appropriate support.

“Your Life Your Choice has really had a positive impact on the quality of James’ life.

“We chose Carers Queensland as our Your Life Your Choice Host Provider for two reasons. Firstly, they use PATH Planning to develop the support plan - I understood this process so was comfortable with it. Secondly, because James has a profound disability, he relies heavily on us, as his carers, to make decisions that are in his best interests. We felt that Carers Queensland had a grasp on this process from both his, and our, perspective. Indeed, our relationship with Carers Queensland has been a huge help throughout the process of setting up Your Life Your Choice for our family. I believe our transition was as easy as it was because of the communication and respect we received from Carers Queensland.

“We chose to take on some of the responsibility for managing James’ funding to see whether it was going to work for us. I felt that easing in was less stressful, and it gave me the opportunity to grow with it in good time, learning along the way.

“Prior to this, all we purchased for James were in-home or community access support hours as dictated by Disability Guidelines. Under the Your Life Your Choice model we have been able to provide very specific supports for James, which are also very flexible. We have purchased equipment for him; personal care products; medically approved nutrition; given him more independence and comfort with his transport; introduced personal care shifts in his support shifts; and retained flexible in home and community access support hours.

“Your Life Your Choice has really had a positive impact on the quality of James’ life. We can now choose how to use his funding to address his changing needs.”

“

This is my gorgeous daughter Lauren who has a fascination with chooks. This was taken on a recent trip to outback Qld.  
**Karen Edwards**





# Speaking up

## Systemic Advocacy and Research

Ensuring the carer voice is heard by State and Commonwealth government elected leaders and industry experts is a fundamental part of our peak advocacy role. Similarly, research is central to how we understand and interpret the issues and concerns of carers and is indispensable to our systemic advocacy work.

## Family Support and Advocacy Service

Our Advocacy Team assist and support carers with matters that could be referred to or are being handled by the Office of the Public Guardian, The Public Trustee of Queensland or the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT). This year, the team attended 114 Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal hearings, and successfully mediated 22 cases prior to a Tribunal hearing. They also opened 15 new cases during the year, and ran 27 group information sessions for 828 carers, their families and service providers.

## Carer Self-Advocacy Training

Delivered by the regional teams, the self-advocacy training aims to empower carers with the skills necessary for successful self-advocacy.

“We delivered 11 self-advocacy workshops this year.”

“My wife Heather and I relocated from a fairly remote rural community to the Cairns region so that we would be closer to our children and medical facilities for Heather’s condition of dementia. Nothing will ever erase the memory of 50 years of happy marriage.  
**Fred Dykstra**



Photography: Fred Dykstra

# Financial performance overview

**2014/15** An overview of Carers Queensland Inc. financial performance 2014/2015

The major sources of recurrent funding during the year were as follows:

HACC	Carer Liaison and Support – State & Federal	\$3,441,909
DSS	Carers Information Support Services	\$578,496
DSS	National Carers Counselling Program	\$1,113,076
DSS	Young Carer Program	\$69,958
LPITAF	Family Support and Advocacy Program	\$237,303
HACC	Multicultural Advisory Service – State & Federal	\$1,912,171
DSS	Mental Health Program	\$114,654
DSS	Better Start Program	\$427,487
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$7,895,054</b>

The major sources of additional one-off funding during the year were as follows:

DSS	Mental Health Program (Surplus 13-14)	\$26,751
DSS	Better Start Program (Surplus 13-14)	\$97,520
Communities	Participant Readiness Program	\$333,332
DETE	Community Learning Program	\$191,100
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$648,703</b>

We would like to publicly acknowledge the on-going support received from the following funding bodies.

### DSS

Department of Social Services

### LPITAF

Legal Practitioner Interest on Trust Accounts Fund

### Communities

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

### DETE

Department of Education, Training and Employment

The above funds were utilised mainly in the payment of salaries and associated costs (71%) in supporting unpaid carers in Queensland in their caring role through the provision of information and support, community development, education & training, advocacy and counselling.

“

Dad teaches me about gardening and growing. One of the best parts of my carer's role is learning from my parents. I had to stop trying to take over, and instead, provide support which allows my parents to continue to work on their own activities for themselves.

**Beth Cavallari**



Photography: Beth Cavallari



*Placing Carers First*

Carers Queensland Inc. ABN. 20 061 257 725

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 /CarersQueensland  
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For information, advice, carer support and access to counselling, advocacy and other services, contact the Carer Advisory Service **1800 242 636** (free call except from mobiles)