

# FIRST

MAGAZINE



**AUTUMN 2018**

**CARER SUPPORT GROUPS**

**GRIEF AND HOPE**

**SUPPORTING CULTURAL AND  
LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY**

**NDIS IN CENTRAL QUEENSLAND**



**CarersQLD**  
Australia



## A friend. Everybody needs one.

Sometimes, you just need someone to sit down and listen. It may not solve all the problems you're facing, but it does help you cope.

So remember, we're always willing to listen. **Call us 1800 242 636.**

## From the Chair



**2018** is upon us and is undoubtedly a year of great change, challenge and opportunity for Carers Queensland!

In February, we celebrated the first anniversary of the commencement of our local area coordination responsibilities under the NDIS LAC Partners in the Community program in Toowoomba.

In the same month, we officially celebrated the opening of our Rockhampton office from which, along with Emerald & Gladstone, our LAC services for Central Queensland are being delivered.

Major reforms in the delivery of home care services in 2017 are still being felt by carers who bear the brunt of these changes with limited information and often declining support. And that's frustrating given the critical role carers play as gatekeepers and buyers of health services such as aged care and disability.

Our mission is finding and advocating for that support.

This year, the organisation will focus on helping carers to navigate programs such as the NDIS and committed Consumer Directed Care in aged care.

In partnership with major industry players, we are exploring opportunities to help carers develop and maintain the skills, training and confidence to re-enter the workforce.

Our focus is practical.

We eschew the political and the ideological in favour of tangible outcomes for those we support. We measure our success by what we deliver, not by what we say.

All of us need carers. They are the ones who carry a load we would all otherwise have to share.

*Jim Toohey*

## From the CEO



It never ceases to amaze me the incredible amount of technology changes that have happened over my working life. The majority of them most certainly have made our lives a lot easier.

We are excited to be working on a pilot project that provides fall detection, GPS location reporting, multiple carer alert functions and more through a watch that you can wear every day.

Many people are hesitant to wear a pendant that identifies them as someone at risk of falling, or just don't get in the habit of putting it on daily. Whereas nearly all of us are comfortable wearing a watch. So we will be really interested in the feedback we get from participants in the trial as well as their carers as to the ease and functionality of this new technology.

Of course, not everyone embraces technology. My husband for instance would never consider himself as tech savvy. He clung to his old Nokia phone till it was way past its use by date, and finally gave in to my suggestion he get a smartphone.

I just taught him the basics. He can send a text (and is actually King of the Emoji), make a call, add someone to the contacts list and take & send a photo. I didn't go into many of the apps on it and I certainly didn't try to explain Siri.

Then the other day he was trying to write a text and, as he does time and time again, held the button down too long and up came the Siri screen with the written words 'Can I help you with anything?' He loudly yelled about how he didn't know why that screen kept coming up and there were a few expletives in his rant. Then Siri quietly but firmly, spoke aloud for the first time and said, "There is no need to speak to me like that." Total silence from husband. Then I see him frantically pressing buttons and I asked him what on earth he was trying to do and he said "I'm trying to get that woman back on the phone to apologise". Note to self: Time for another phone lesson!

*Debra Cottrell*

# The 2018 Carer-Friendly Business Awards

## Coming soon

Are you a carer who has experienced amazing customer service?

The Carer-Friendly Business Awards recognise local businesses, employees and employers who truly support Queensland carers.

It's time to start thinking about businesses or individuals that have gone above and beyond to make a positive difference to your life as a carer.

This is the 15th year of Carers Queensland's Carer-Friendly Business Awards. The award nominations are open to all carers from May this year.

This is your opportunity to say "thank you" and ensure the business or person who has assisted you is recognised.

### Previous winners include:

- a hairdresser who provides a bespoke service for an autistic youngster;
- a garage workshop that supports an employee with flexible work hours and fundraises to help his wife who has motor neurone disease;



- a household cleaner that refused payment to help a carer; and
- a cinema that alters the sound and lighting at special screenings for children with autism to ensure they feel safe and comfortable during the session.

Stay tuned for more information in the next issue of First on how you can nominate someone who provides exceptional service or supports a carer-friendly workplace.

## Quick Legal Tips

Here are a couple of legal tips that carers and the person with care needs should be aware of.

### 1. Eligibility for TPD / Early Release of Superannuation

Most people have Total and Permanent Disability insurance through their Superannuation. A total and permanent disability claim entitles you to payment of a lump sum if you have suffered an injury or illness that prevents you from returning to work in the same capacity.

Eligibility to make a claim will depend on the requirements as set out in the policy of insurance. This claim is separate to the balance of the superannuation account. In some instances, you may also be able to access your superannuation for either financial hardship or compassionate grounds. The Department of Human Services manages the early release process.

To find out if you are eligible, visit [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au) and search for 'early release of superannuation'.

### 2. Employment Rights of Carers

Workers in Australia are protected by a number of rights with respect to their employment. Most employees who are full time are entitled to paid sick leave. This can be used if you are ill, however, most people are unaware that this can also be used to care for an immediate family or household member who is sick or injured.

All employees, including casual employees, are entitled to take up to two days unpaid carer's leave each year.

Your employer cannot take negative action against you if you take sick or carer's leave. If this does occur, such as losing your job, you may be entitled to a remedy. You can find more information at [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au) and search for 'sick and carers leave'.

Content contributed by Shine Lawyers



# New Pilot Study

## Connecting Wearers and Carers

Many people are hesitant to wear a pendant or something that easily identifies they are wearing an alert device in case of a fall or emergency situation. Carers Queensland in collaboration with ConnectUs Life are working on a pilot project that provides fall detection, GPS location reporting, multiple carer alert functions and much more through a watch that can be worn every day.

With the exponential growth of the aged care industry, cost and care issues are a global challenge and one which ConnectUs Life, a specialist care-related services provider, hopes to combat through RightMinder®, an app that leverages advancements in wearable technology and the increase in availability and use of affordable smart watches.

RightMinder caters to the elderly, those in need, along with private and professional carers. Available in multiple languages and in over 136 countries, RightMinder delivers a patent-pending solution for emergency alerts and tracking of the watch wearer.

Trials of RightMinder will commence in the first quarter of 2018, with the aim of connecting 'wearers' and 'carers'.

Ben Slater, ConnectUs Life CIO says, "Our core focus is to ensure wearers maintain meaningful independence with an efficient, yet discreet safety and security alert system. The support that Carers Queensland offers carers throughout Queensland is invaluable for the people who help our elderly and those in need, and with RightMinder trials we hope to assist with Carers Queensland's life-changing work."



"The technology industry must work hard to create solutions that can enhance the care sector without enormous cost. The care sector must also get actively involved in this development," said RightMinder co-founder, Drew Steptoe. "This collaborative approach between Carers Queensland and ConnectUs Life will not only assist with advancing this technology, it will also provide carers with a level of comfort that the person they care for is safe," says Mr Steptoe.

## Online Survey Health and Wellbeing of Carers

Carers Queensland, in collaboration with the School of Psychology and Counselling at Queensland University of Technology, has developed a comprehensive survey to gauge both the positive and negative impacts of caring for someone. Danielle Brazel, a provisional psychologist studying at QUT, is leading this vital piece of work, a first in Australia.

This information will help develop a better understanding of the protective and risk factors for carers wellbeing and may inform policy and service delivery that relate to carers.

### Can you Help?

Your participation will involve completing an 85-item anonymous online survey with questions regarding your experiences as a carer. The questions focus on the full range of your experiences as a carer, both positive experiences such as "Caring enables me to fulfil my sense of duty" and "Caring strengthened my relationships with others", and potentially negative experiences such as "Caring does not make me feel appreciated" and "Have you ever experienced abuse in your caregiving role?" There are also questions related to your health and wellbeing such as "During the past month, how often did you feel satisfied with life?"



The survey will take about 15 to 25 minutes of your time.

To have your say please visit <http://survey.qut.edu.au/f/190710/67f7/>

A summary report of the research findings will be available on the Carers Queensland website when the study is completed.

# Caring for Someone with Incontinence

Many family members and friends find caring for a person with incontinence to be one of the most difficult aspects of caring.

Incontinence can be unpredictable, add dramatically to your workload and be very costly. Many carers report feeling angry, frustrated, lonely, and not coping as they try to manage alone. It is not always easy to care for a person with incontinence, but the right advice and support from a health professional may make it more manageable for you.

Carers can be of any age or gender, who provide unpaid care and support to family members or friends. The person being cared for may have special needs, particularly those who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail or elderly.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there is currently 2.7 million unpaid family and friend carers in Australia looking after the most vulnerable in our society. Of them, over 540,000 report that they perform daily continence care.

Chief Executive, Rowan Cockerell, said the Continence Foundation of Australia works to improve the quality of life of carers as well as the people they care for.

“We know that many carers find incontinence to be one of the most difficult aspects of the caring role, with challenges being physical, emotional and financial. But these unsung heroes take all these factors in their stride to deliver an invaluable quality of life and dignity to their loved ones,” she said.

Today, there are over five million Australians living with incontinence, which equates to one-in-four people aged over 15 years.

“Unfortunately, incontinence still attracts a certain stigma in the community and people are often too embarrassed to talk openly about the issue,” she said.

The 2015 Continence Foundation’s Carer of the Year, Jodie Roberts, has cared for her 12-year-old son Joe since he was born with profound disabilities. She believes her award helped create a greater understanding and awareness of the enormous strains and challenges carers like her experience every day.

“Carers will always put themselves last, will be inevitably financially worse off, will put their careers aside, and will have precious little social life, if any. Caring for my son is a team effort and I couldn’t do it without the support of my husband and children,” said Jodie.

The Continence Foundation of Australia, on behalf of the Australian Government, operates the free National Continence Helpline (1800 33 00 66), staffed by continence nurse advisors.



Last year, they answered over 30,000 calls for help, one-third of those from carers requesting information about treatments, accessing service providers, specialist health professionals, financial assistance or resources such as brochures and leaflets.

## Some tips for caring for someone with incontinence

### Get a continence assessment

A continence assessment can help identify the type of incontinence the person you are caring for has. After the continence assessment, a treatment and management program can be worked out for the person. This will help everyone involved – socially, emotionally and financially.

### Products

Before choosing products, factors to be considered are the level of ability (e.g. to grasp and reach), body shape and size, and how you help as a carer. A continence nurse or physiotherapist can provide guidance about the most appropriate products.

### Funding

The Australian Government’s Continence Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS) provides an annual subsidy of over \$583.20 for someone with permanent or severe incontinence to help pay for continence aid products. Call the **National Continence Helpline 1800 33 00 66** about eligibility and applying.

### Stepping out

The National Public Toilet Map provides the details and locations of more than 17,000 public and private toilets around the country.

Visit [www.toiletmap.gov.au](http://www.toiletmap.gov.au) to download the smartphone app and to find out more information.

### Help for carers

Help is available online. Read the fact sheet *Caring for someone with incontinence* or the free booklet *Help for people who care for someone with bladder or bowel problems*, at [www.continence.org.au](http://www.continence.org.au) Resources are also available in printed form by calling the **National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66** and asking for a copy.

*This article is supplied by the Continence Foundation of Australia, the peak national organisation working to improve the quality of life of all Australians affected by incontinence.*

“Over five million Australians – one in four people aged 15 years or over, are incontinent.”

# Supporting Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Carers Queensland's Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD) program assists culturally and linguistically diverse carers and the people they care for who are under 65 years of age to access community care services.

The CALD program is available to people in our community who:

- are from a culturally or linguistically diverse (CALD) background and under the age of 65; and
- are a person with a medical problem, disability, mental illness; or a family member providing care for someone with these conditions; and
- require basic support services to remain in their home, and also support for the person who cares for them.

In addition to supporting people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Carers Queensland's CALD officers provide training and information to community groups in improving cultural awareness. Our CALD officers also connect people with the support services available to them and their carers including Queensland Community Care, the NDIS and our own services.

## Nerayan's story

Hoping for a better life, Nerayan travelled from Nepal to Australia to study at the beginning of 2009. He was keen to experience the western way of living and build a better future through gaining a tertiary qualification.

Initially the move to Australia was stressful, and although people were friendly, Nerayan found it hard to find a job and feel accepted. He moved home to Nepal and married, and later returned to Australia with his wife.

Away from her family and friends, Nerayan's wife began to feel isolated and constantly worried about the lack of contact with others, and whether her husband truly accepted her. The negative spiral of thoughts caused Nerayan's wife to suffer a severe depression.

The extent of her depression was not picked up until she was pregnant and visiting an antenatal clinic on the Sunshine Coast. A number of organisations became involved in supporting Nerayan and his wife including Suncare, Partners in Recovery and Carers Queensland.



Through Carers Queensland's CALD program, the couple accessed other community care support services and learnt some practical tips on how to prepare for the birth of their child. Kathryn, Carers Queensland's CALD officer, also advocated on behalf of Nerayan's wife, speaking with the doctors to ensure she could breast feed her baby from the start.

As Nerayan was now caring for his child and his wife who still suffered mood swings, he needed extra time to complete study assignments. Kathryn wrote a letter and supplied evidence to the university, so Nerayan could have a time extension for his assignments.

Kathryn continues to visit the family, and was the first to call on them when they arrived home from hospital with their baby.

Nerayan is full of hope for a brighter future. "I am hopeful that I can complete my nursing degree and provide a good future for my family. There is help here and things are getting better with these supports in place.

"I have a healthy child and my wife is also more comfortable and positive."

## How do I access the CALD program?

To access the program or to find out more, please contact Carers Queensland by phoning **1800 242 636** or by visiting your local Carers Queensland office.

# Grief to Hope

**G**rief is something we typically associate with a death, but there are many forms of grief, and many situations that evoke in us a sense of grief and sadness. Grief is a normal response to a loss and may include the reaction to the loss of a loved one or a decline in their health, a new diagnosis, loss of your home, health and capacity, a friendship, a job or even moving to a new town or country. Unless there are complications, which may require help from a professional, intense feelings of grief tend to diminish over time and we move towards a resolution and adjustment of our new circumstances. But, what happens when there is no actual endpoint to our grief? For example, we may be faced with an ongoing loss such as caring for someone with Alzheimer's or Parkinson's Disease, or raising a child with disabilities or a debilitating condition little is known about.

## Chronic Sorrow

In 1962 a Social Worker, Stuart Olshansky, developed a theory of Chronic Sorrow to describe the normal grief response to an ongoing living loss such as that experienced by parents of children with disabilities. It is considered a pervasive and profound sadness that requires a trigger to re-emerge such as illness, discovery of a new medical problem, when a younger child surpasses the child developmentally, when parents consider issues of guardianship or at particular ages for example entering school, onset of adolescence or age 21. Unlike depression, chronic sorrow is not a pathologic condition and medication is not usually effective unless the person is also clinically depressed. Depression is a mood disturbance which may occur without a precipitating loss, and which can interfere with everyday functioning. Chronic sorrow on the other hand can be present but not necessarily stop a person from meeting their work and family demands even while in the midst of recurrent pain and sorrow.

Carers can experience 'ambiguous' grief where the person remains physically present but psychologically absent and this can also complicate grieving. You may find yourself feeling overwhelmed, exhausted and confused, and you may also experience anxiety and/or depression. Some carers may wish the person they care for would die, so their suffering could end. Carers may then feel guilty for feeling this way and having these thoughts. Again, these are normal grief reactions.

## Physical Signs of Grief:

- Shortness of breath
- Tightness in the throat and chest
- Changes in eating patterns
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Tiredness and fatigue
- Lack of energy
- Vulnerability to illness

## Emotional Signs of Grief:

- Loneliness and isolation
- Confusion
- Deep ongoing sadness
- Feelings of anger and rage
- Resentment towards the person you care for
- Deep feelings of aloneness
- Fear
- Frustration
- Feelings of hopelessness

## What Helps?

- Learning about your loved one's condition and organisations who can help
- Attending workshops and educational programs for carers
- Joining a good support group
- Talking to/confiding in trusted friends, family, service providers
- Using the Carers Queensland free counselling service
- Asking questions when unsure
- Being aware of your feelings and own needs
- Taking small breaks



- Taking longer respite breaks
- Recognising the positives & what caring has brought to your life, what areas you may have grown in or become stronger in as a result of your care role
- Recalling / recognising experiences of joy in your care role
- Expressing joy and hope
- Considering expressions of sorrow as normal reactions to the ongoing losses you encounter
- Developing realistic expectations
- Taking time to consider your feelings & allowing yourself to experience the process of grief
- Seeking support that is practical and decreases your sense of distress
- Self-care such as gardening, naps, aromatherapy, hot baths, sitting and reading
- Being kind to yourself
- Remembering you are part of a large army of people providing care every day to someone who needs you

### References:

*Theory of Chronic Sorrow* by Abby Church sourced from <https://p500-fall2010-wikispaces.com/Theory+of+chronic+sorrow>

*Living with Chronic Sorrow* sourced from [http://www.chronicsorrow.org/?page\\_id=17](http://www.chronicsorrow.org/?page_id=17)

*Chronic Sorrow: One Mother's Experience With Two Children With Lissencephaly* by Jean M. Scornaienchi, *Journal of Pediatric Health Care* 17:6

*Understanding Ambiguous Loss (Fact Sheet)*, MN Adopt

*An Unrecognised Grief – loss and grief issues for carers. A Carers Guide.* Carers Victoria

# Grief to Hope - Maree's story

**D**amien was a typical teenage boy, enjoying year 10 at school and the company of his mates. Towards the end of 2014, Damien began to suffer memory loss, anxiety, confusion and found it hard to concentrate on his studies. His mother, Maree, was at a loss to understand the dramatic change in her son's behaviour. It wasn't until Damien was diagnosed with 7q11.23, a rare genetic chromosomal abnormality, that the pieces of the puzzle started to fall into place. In 2015, Maree left her job to become a full-time carer for Damien. First sat down with Maree to hear her heartwarming story of love, grief, and hope for a better future for her youngest son.

*Loss can be a complicated business. Did you go through a grieving process when your son was diagnosed with this rare chromosomal abnormality?*

We were grieving for our teenager who once went to Vanuatu with his school chaplaincy group, and was now unable to complete his final two years of school. Damien was in such a bad way with psychosis, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and general confusion. Damien was grieving for what he couldn't do in his life, and I was grieving for him. I was also grieving for my own life, where I gave up my work as a support worker. I also gave up my work colleagues and friends and was isolated at home.

We are still grieving and it will always be there. It is different with our other son Jason, who was born with Down Syndrome, we just accepted him. That's him and that's how he was born. It is different for Damien who blossomed through school. It is sad for Damien that he had to change.

*Did you seek help and support from family and friends or other sources?*

Luckily, I have friends who work in the disability sector who were able to provide support. I handled it by speaking with people who understood. ARAFMI was recommended as a support service.

I also started a daily diary of everything that was happening, as there was too much going on and too much confusion. Facebook groups such as *Unique*, in the UK, has been very helpful.

The stigma with mental health is that Damien looked like he could be going to school but he was not mentally capable of it. With his OCD, he went through a period where he was having up to three showers a day that lasted for up to an hour. It was a matter of folding these layers back and working out what was going on and speaking with other parents going through similar situation.

*When we chatted, you mentioned that your teenage son was not able to make his school formal. Where do you think you are now in terms of grieving for the teenage son who was unable to make his school formal?*

Damien lost track of time but I knew when everyone was having their formal and I saw it in the paper. Damien speaks openly that he didn't finish school and missed his formal and that in a way is a big breakthrough for him as he speaks about this now.

*"My son is going to be a success story one day. This is what I hold dear to my heart. We can't do anything about turning the pages back with him completing school and having his formal. He can live with this and with ongoing support he will go from strength to strength."*

It is really important to keep telling him that things will get better. Damien would like to go back and complete 11 and 12. He has the mental knowledge but couldn't cope with it at this stage. Also medication affects him. At the moment it's only small steps and I am positive he will get back to achieving his goals.



For me, I am working to achieve my goals by working around Damien when he has extra support. I do photography for friends, Zumba, tennis and have outings with my husband. Helping other carers who are going through hard times, also makes me happy.

*Any tips for other carers who have experienced a sense of loss in some way?*

- Allow yourself time to grieve and cry when you need to – it's normal to do that.
- Keep connected to people who may not understand what you are going through. Try and keep that normality for yourself and things will change and even if friends aren't ringing you, then make the effort to call them.
- Join support groups and talk to a professional if you need to.
- Knowledge is everything – understanding about what the person you care for is going through – google google google!

# Universal Life Lessons – A Beautiful Legacy

**O**n 16 April 2015 my life changed forever. My darling youngest daughter, Anna, passed away at 29 years of age. However, what I wish to share with you is how Anna gave me some important life lessons. So many, in fact, I am still learning them today!

Anna had Ring 22 Chromosome Abnormality, which is very rare. When she was born there were 30 known cases in the world... very few had lived to adulthood. We were blessed that we had an early diagnosis and understood that Anna would require full-time care for the rest of her life. As a mother, (and I am sure other mums can relate to this) I was determined to enable Anna to have a happy and normal life focusing on her needs and aspirations. It became our families' greatest joy to see Anna progressing even if it was as simple as being able to use Makaton sign language to ask for food or drink. The life lessons from Anna were huge... every milestone – no matter how small – was celebrated.

With this person-centred approach, we let Anna's diagnosis pale into insignificance while we appreciated Anna's difference and continued to respond to her needs. Anna was six years old developmentally; however, anyone that met her would tell you that she was far beyond her years emotionally and spiritually. Everywhere we went she touched hearts.

I feel, as carers, although we have a responsibility and duty of care, alongside of that there is great joy and love in knowing you are supporting someone in your family to live their life as best as they can. I know there were times I was exhausted at the end of Anna's life when she had significant medical needs as her condition progressed. Being the eldest woman in the world to have survived to almost being 30 living with her chronic condition, was a testimony to her stamina, determination and love of life. The truth is we focused on every day and not on what the future held. That was another important lesson.

Two and a half years on, I am doing the same. I am focusing on every day and have re-invented myself. I was fortunate that Anna lived independently (until her end of life when she returned home with me) and had wonderful support workers who she loved dearly, while I was working full-time as Client Services Manager for Muscular Dystrophy Queensland. However, my life revolved totally around Anna. I loved her dearly, I loved her company, and I simply loved who she was. She was so endearing. Compared to many carers, I did have other things to fall back on such as my work. However, it didn't change the grief and loss that came with her passing and suddenly my role as a carer was gone.



Several months after Anna passed, I was asked 'what were the lessons from Anna's life?' and could I present a paper at the National Conference of the VCFS 22q11 Foundation at The Children's Westmead Hospital in Sydney. I said 'yes'. It focused me. In fact, I was very focused. I not only wrote a paper, I wrote a book 'Universal Life Lessons from My Brilliant Blue Bohemian Butterfly'. It shared the richness of Anna's life; her trials and tribulations and, most of all, the universal life lessons she left as her beautiful legacy.

As I wrote from the heart, it was easy to capture the life stories and life lessons and, without realising it, I had a book published which I had authored. I was never conscious of my achievement until, a year later, I wrote another in the universal life lessons' series 'Gift of Your Greatness'. It was inspired by another dear friend, Martha Farrell who was killed by the Taliban in May 2015 and whose place in the world was to be an advocate for gender equality. She also left a beautiful legacy – the Martha Farrell Foundation (India) is now continuing the important work that Martha instigated.

Thanks to Anna and Martha, I have found another way of expressing my grief and loss through writing, which I would never have done had it not been for these wonderful women in my life.

***“ My own life lesson is to never give up even when grief overwhelms you; it can become your greatest strength. ”***

This article was contributed by Susan Ball. For more information on the books Susan has written visit [www.universallifelessons.com](http://www.universallifelessons.com)

# Carer Advisory Service

**A**re you looking for information, referral advice or carer support? Carers Queensland's Carer Advisory Service (CAS) is a state-wide service that assists family carers with planning, referral advice and other information. Our experienced advisors are trained to understand carers' needs.

## The CAS team provides:

- specialised information and resources about caring - including support services available or financial and legal issues;
- referral advice about services in Queensland including respite, counselling, education and training, or carer support groups;
- emotional support and referral to Carers Queensland services.

We also work with other agencies such as community groups, health professionals and government to enhance recognition and awareness of carers' roles and needs.

*The Carer Advisory Service is an Australian Government Initiative.*



*Wendy is one of our friendly advisors. In the last 12 months, the CAS Team assisted over 2,000 carers.*

**Connect with us for information, advice and support on  
1800 242 636 (freecall except mobiles)  
Monday - Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm**

## It's Good to Talk!

While caring can be rewarding, everyone needs support from time to time.

The National Carer Counselling Program provides short-term counselling to help carers:

- understand and manage overwhelming and confusing feelings;
- balance their own needs with those of the person they are caring for;
- manage conflict, stress and other emotional factors that make caring more difficult;
- build resilience and cope with change and/or uncertainty;
- improve their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing;
- cope with the transition after the caring role ends.



### CARER STORY

"I was in an alone world. My primary focus had become the constant care of my mother. I felt lost and disconnected. My health care professional suggested Carers Queensland (specifically the counselling program). I found people who truly understood. They were open, honest and friendly, often giving insights into difficult issues that were too close for me to realise.

My life has been radically different since that first connection. I do not know how my life would be now had I not reached out and been helped in so

many vital ways. Thank you Carers Queensland Counsellors for truly bringing myself and others out of the isolation and despair that often occurs facing the daily necessities, trials and rewards associated with the (24/7) care of a loved one."

Laurel, Brisbane South

*If you are an unpaid carer and would like to talk to a counsellor, call Carers Queensland's Carer Advisory Service on 1800 242 636 to make an appointment.*

*The National Carer Counselling Program is funded by the Australian Government. There is no cost to carers for this service.*

# Carer Support Groups

## Connecting with others

Research studies show there is a strong association between happiness and close relationships with spouses, family, friends, and social circles. Having a personal connection with someone creates mental and emotional stimulation and increases both health and wellbeing.

Recognising the need for social connectedness, Carers Queensland is committed to providing carers with a range of safe, non-judgmental environments. Carers can openly share their experiences, acquire new knowledge and skills, develop friendships, and support networks. A support group should not replace your standard medical care, but it can be a valuable support to help you cope.

## Supporting each other

A support group is a gathering of people who share a common health concern or interest. Carer support groups may meet together for an activity, to discuss their experiences, share ideas, and provide emotional support for one another. Unlike formal group therapy, self-help support groups are usually not led by a trained professional therapist, however they can be a helpful coping tool to complement formal treatment.

Carers Queensland runs carer support groups throughout Queensland. To know that 'you are not alone' can be reassuring. Connecting with a group is also a chance to take some 'time out'.

Our Ipswich office runs a special interest group on Health and Wellbeing. This covers a range of themes throughout the year based on the needs of the group. Healthy gardening, trauma, grief and loss, creative art and creative writing for carers are some of the recent themes explored by the group. Counsellor Nola Tully says this has been a great success.

"We have seen many benefits of having this special interest group. Taking time out for yourself is very important when you are caring for someone, and the opportunity to meet up with others can really make a positive difference to someone's day.

"One of the popular themes covered last year was healthy gardening. The benefits of this activity extend beyond connecting with others. Gardening encourages the use of many motor skills, improves strength and keeps you active. As well as the physical benefits, gardening is a great way to relax. There is even evidence to suggest that some time out in the garden can reduce stress and anxiety, help you sleep better and increase your level of happiness."

Carer Rose Grasmeder has been a member of the gardening group since it started in September 2016. "I always look forward to our Healthy Gardening classes run by Nola.

This is appreciated and highly valued by all who partake. Personally, I always feel refreshed after each session, and I am so pleased it is continuing into 2018.

"I was also very fortunate to attend the floral arrangement session as part of the counselling program at the Ipswich Regional Office... Upon arrival, seeing all the various blooms took me to another world - one that made me forget the rigours of my caring role and how tired I was in the morning," she said.



## Benefits of being involved in support groups include:

- Feeling less lonely, isolated or judged
- Gaining a sense of empowerment and control
- Improving your coping skills and sense of adjustment
- Talking openly and honestly about your feelings
- Reducing distress, depression, anxiety or fatigue
- Developing a clearer understanding of what to expect with your situation
- Getting practical advice or information about treatment options
- Comparing notes about resources, such as doctors and alternative options

Carers Queensland ran over 100 themed support groups last year and delivered close to 6,000 support events.



## Want to find out more?

To find a carer support group near you visit our website [www.carersqld.asn.au](http://www.carersqld.asn.au) You can also contact your local regional office to find out more, and while you are speaking to your local office, ask to subscribe to the local Carers Queensland newsletter for regular support group updates.

# Getting NDIS Ready in Central Queensland

Carers Queensland's team in Central Queensland has increased eightfold since August, as our latest NDIS Local Area Coordination service hit the ground running to meet the fast-tracked introduction of the scheme.

As the local National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Partner in the Community, we've already worked with more than five hundred Central Queenslanders to get their NDIS plans in place and start making use of the scheme.

We've seen participants receive funding for home and car modifications to enable them to stay safe and mobile, maintain their independence, and be an active part of their local community.

We've seen approvals for adaptive technology, prosthetics, mobility aids and personal support, essential for participants to live with dignity and self-determination.

And we've seen the difference the NDIS makes to carers, as people who've worried what will happen to their loved one when they can no longer care full-time, see new support put in place and the promise of an ordinary life into the future.

For parents like Sarah from Rockhampton, it means help with the cost of services.

Sarah has three children, including two sons with developmental disabilities including ASD. Before the family started using the NDIS, they were out of pocket for the cost of the boys' therapies which put a great deal of pressure on the family.

Before the NDIS, the family's only support came from early intervention services, only available to children under seven. With her eldest now 11, they've had no help with the cost of his support for four years.

"It is a massive burden that's been removed," Sarah says.

"It covers three of their therapies, so we'll only be out of pocket for half of their last therapy."

Sarah's sons' NDIS plans were implemented late last year, making them one of the first families in Central Queensland to be using the scheme.

The introduction of the NDIS in Central Queensland was brought forward from its original date, with people already using state-funded services transitioning from November 2017 rather than January 2018 as previously planned.



*LAC Marcia with participant Donna.  
NDIS Local Area Co-ordination Service, Rockhampton*

We have grown from five original staff members in the Carer Services Team in August, to add another 38 staff members across Rockhampton, Gladstone and Emerald.

We've opened three new offices, including a new Carers Queensland presence in the major Central Queensland centres of Gladstone and Emerald, and a much bigger office in Rockhampton's CBD to house our expanding team.

Our team went straight to work getting local families ready for the NDIS – even when that meant working from mobile phones at folding tables while their new office was renovated around them.

We've spent a lot of time on the road too, working with families in rural areas of Central Queensland like Biloela and The Gemfields to make sure everyone gets off to a good start with the NDIS, no matter where they live.

Our Community Development team are also clocking up miles, delivering NDIS information to families who haven't had support in the past. They're also building wider awareness of the issues and barriers people with disability face and the community's responsibility to provide equal access and support for everyone, so we can build a Central Queensland where everyone is welcome and valued.

# Four Weeks Of Self Care

## Week 1 - Surround yourself with positive people

The people around you have a huge impact on your life. Some people can drain your happiness, personal resources, energy and self-confidence. Think about the people you spend the most time with. Do they have similar values to you? Would you call them positive? Do they help you feel competent? Do they support you? Do you feel energised, peaceful, or happy having spent time with them or speaking with them?

According to Jim Rohn (an American motivational speaker), "you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with". Think about five people closest to you – their strengths, weaknesses, positive and negative points and personality traits.

Are they five people you would happily be the average of?

**Care for yourself this week by spending more time connecting with people who enrich your life, inspire you or make you laugh.**

## Week 2 - Nurture your personal boundaries

Boundaries are the limits we set with other people that indicate what is acceptable and unacceptable in their behaviour towards us.

Boundaries involve the following realms of our life:

Intellectual - our own thoughts and opinions

Emotional - our feelings

Physical - our personal space

Social - our friends and activities

Spiritual - spiritual beliefs

We know when our boundaries are being pushed or ignored when we feel we are being taken advantage of, or we feel we have to explain and justify our decisions.

Caring for yourself means knowing what your boundaries are, communicating them, and consistently maintaining and protecting them. You do not have to justify or explain your boundaries but rather state them clearly and respectfully when you notice they are being tested.

**Care for yourself this week by noticing when your boundaries are being challenged. Practice communicating and maintaining your boundaries assertively.**



## Week 3 Stand Tall

When you were a child do you remember your parents ever saying to you "stand up straight and stop slouching", or "pull your shoulders back"? Although it may have been annoying at the time, it seems it was for a very good reason.

When we stand up right with good posture we are more likely to feel better not only physically but mentally and emotionally. Research has shown good posture is linked to higher self-confidence, better memory and more energy.

Good posture also helps with digestion, relieves back pain, improves breathing, reduces tension, increases circulations, helps with balance and boosts our self-image.

Take some time to check your posture.

Stand facing away from a wall and slowly back up until you make contact with it. Your feet should be shoulder width apart, flat on the floor and a few inches away from the wall. Notice what touches the wall. Ideally, you want three contact points: the back of your head, shoulder blades and buttocks.

If you are not making contact, reorient your upper body, without moving your feet so you are in the correct standing position. Step away from the wall and hold your position. Now try walking while maintaining your upper body position.

**Care for yourself this week by noticing how you are standing, walking or sitting. Lift your head, straighten your spine and pull your shoulders back. Notice how much easier it is to breathe.**

## Week 4 Quiet your inner critic

Almost everyone has met "Inner Critic". Inner critic is the thought gremlin that tries to convince you that the negative descriptions you have heard about yourself over the years are actually true. Sometimes it disappears for a time but can often pop up unexpectedly to share some unhelpful descriptions that you may have forgotten.

Inner Critic's favourite words are "you should have", and "you can't". This gremlin stops you doing things you would like to do, criticises you, compares you to others, and makes you feel like you are not quite "good enough". Your thoughts can greatly influence how you feel and how you behave. Embracing negative thoughts is unhelpful and quite self-destructive.

When the Inner critic gremlin comes knocking at your door send it away by practicing the following:

1. Be aware of your thoughts and what they say to you and about you.

2. Are they positive and kind or are they negative, judgemental and unkind?
3. Be aware of the times that they appear and when they are kept at bay.
4. Look for different perspectives and replace critical thoughts with accurate and kind statements. For example, the inner critic that says, "You are a terrible daughter because you went on holidays when mum was unwell. You should have cancelled your break and stayed home". This could be replaced with "I worked hard and saved so I could have a well-deserved break. I put everything in place to ensure mum was well cared for while I was away".
5. Be as kind to yourself as you are to other people.
6. Accept that no one is perfect – accept your flaws and work on the real issues that are important to you and you would like to change.

**Care for yourself this week by silencing your inner critic. Replace negative thoughts about yourself with compassion and kindness.**

# Date Claimers 2018



## **National Carers Week: Sunday 14 – Saturday 20 October**

Celebrating and recognising the 2.7 million Australians who provide care and support to a family member or friend with a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, or who is frail aged.

## **Harmony Day: Wednesday 21 March**

The Harmony Day message is that “Everyone belongs”, reinforcing the importance of inclusiveness to all Australians.

## **The Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games (GC2018): Wednesday 4 April – Sunday 15 April**

The Games will welcome more than 6,600 athletes and team officials from 70 Commonwealth nations and territories to the Gold Coast and event cities Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville, to share in the celebration of sport, entertainment and culture.

## **National Reconciliation Week: Sunday 27 May – Sunday 3 June**

Celebrating and building on respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

## **NAIDOC Week: Sunday 8 – Sunday 15 July**

NAIDOC Week is an opportunity to recognise the contributions of Indigenous Australians in various fields.

## **Multicultural Month: All of August**

A Queensland Government Initiative, showcasing and celebrating our unique diversity and its benefits.

## **National Skills Week: Monday 27 August – Sunday 2 September**

Dedicated to raising the status of practical and vocational learning.

## **Anti-Poverty Week: Sunday 14 – Saturday 20 October**

All Australians are encouraged to organise or take part in an activity aiming to highlight or overcome issues of poverty and hardship here in Australia or overseas.

## **National Grandparents Day: Sunday 28 October**

This special day is an opportunity to acknowledge the efforts and devotion of grandparents in their many roles of caring and supporting their grandchildren.

## **CONTACT** CARERS QUEENSLAND



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### **Townsville**

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### **Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre**

1800 052 222

## **FIRST MAGAZINE**

FIRST magazine is Carers Queensland Ltd's quarterly magazine for members. We invite all carers to submit stories, articles and images for publication. Contributions may be edited for space reasons. Please email all submissions to the editor.

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**Autumn 2018** ISSN 2207-9548 Online

**Editor:** [marketing@carersqld.asn.au](mailto:marketing@carersqld.asn.au)

**Designer:** Your Brand Management • [yourbrandmanagement.com.au](http://yourbrandmanagement.com.au)

**Printed by:** SNAP Underwood, a 100% Indigenous Owned business

**Front Cover:** Atherton Carer Support Group members

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ABN 20 061 257 725

ACN 618 755 490

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