

Carers ACT submission to

ACT Government
2019-20 ACT Budget

Implementing the ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028 –
First Three-Year Action Plan

October 2018

About Carers ACT

Carers ACT is the ACT peak body representing the diversity of Canberrans who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends living with a:

- disability
- chronic health condition or terminal illness
- mental illness or disorder and/or
- are frail aged.

There are nearly 50,000 unpaid carers in the ACT caring for a family member, a friend or neighbour who are an integral part of our aged, health and disability systems.

Carers ACT has a constitutional mandate to represent the voices of carers to government and the wider community. We consult regularly with a diversity of carers and caring families to enable improved understanding of their needs, and better inclusion for them and the people they care for.

Carers ACT also provides advocacy support to Canberra's many Kinship and Foster carers that care for children and young people in out of home care.

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1. Introduction

Carers ACT appreciates the opportunity to respond to the ACT Government's invitation to comment on priority commitments for its 2019-20 Budget.

Carers ACT is the ACT peak body representing the diversity of Canberrans who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends living with a:

- disability
- chronic health condition or terminal illness
- mental illness or disorder and/or
- are frail aged.

Nearly 50,000 unpaid carers in the ACT provide care to family members, friends and neighbours. They are an integral part of our aged, health and disability systems. Deloitte Access Economics estimated carers provided 1.9 billion hours of unpaid care nationally in 2015. The estimated replacement cost of this care with formal care services was \$60.3 billion.¹

In addition, many Canberrans provide care as Kinship or Foster carers to children and young people in out of home care. Carers ACT also delivers the ACT Government-funded Kinship and Foster Carer Advocacy Program.

Carers ACT acknowledges and applauds the ACT Government's ongoing and increasing commitment to carers in its 2017-18 and 2018-19 ACT Budgets and the subsequent launch of the *ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028* and its first Three-year Action Plan.

We thank Minister Steel, the Minister for Community Steel, and Minister Stephen-Smith, the Minister for Disability, for enabling the voice of ACT carers and caring families during the development of the ACT Carers Strategy.

¹ Deloitte Access Economics (2015) *The economic value of informal care in Australia*, 2015 for Carers Australia, Canberra.

More information about the ACT Carers Strategy, its Outcomes and the first Three-year Action Plan are available at <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/home/act-carers-strategy-2018-2028>

2. Implementing the first Three-Year Action Plan of the ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028

2.1. Background

Building upon the 2016 Parliamentary Agreement and the \$250,000 commitment over three years in the 2018-19 ACT Budget, Carers ACT is proud to report the completion of the *ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028* and the first *Three-year Action Plan*.

The 10-year ACT Carers Strategy was developed through a deliberative democracy process with a Carers Voice Panel and a Carer Strategy Taskforce (co-chaired by the ACT Government and Carers ACT). The vision for the ACT Carers Strategy is a community that carers for carers and the people they care for; and supporting carers is investing in Canberra's future.

In his Ministerial Statement on the *ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028* to the ACT Legislative Assembly the Minister for Community Services, Minister Steel, described the significance of the ACT Carers Strategy and the successful launch of the first Three-Year Action Plan. Minister Steel referred to carers' appreciation of the consultative process to develop the ACT Carers Strategy and the first Three-year Action Plan. The Minister said these were a direct result of what carers wanted and needed to make their lives more comfortable, and that they will guide support for carers and recognition of the contribution carers make.²

² See ACT Legislative Assembly on Demand 23 October 2018 <http://aod.parliament.act.gov.au/A73365>

Consultation and Engagement

The consultation and engagement processes used to develop the Strategy and Action Plan were highly collaborative, providing genuine engagement between government, the community sector and ensuring a strong carer voice in driving the direction of the Strategy.

ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028 First Three-Year Action Plan, page 6.

2.2. Themes and actions in the Three-Year Action Plan

The actions in this Action Plan fall broadly under five themes: services and supports for carers; recognition and awareness; inclusion; support for young carers; and workforce and skills recognition.³

THEME 1 SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

OUTCOMES – Carers are supported to navigate and access services and supports to maintain their health and wellbeing as they undertake their caring role.

ACTION

1. Develop and deliver a handbook to support improved understanding of the role of kinship and foster carers in the child protection and out of home care systems, including carer participation and engagement in care planning.
2. Deliver programs and activities to help carers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) carers, navigate available services and supports, such as mentoring for new carers.
3. Define respite care and promote access to suitable respite care.
4. Support carers to advocate for themselves and the people they care for.

³ ACT Government (2018) *ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028 First Three Year Action Plan*, Canberra.

5. Support carers of people with disability to access information and services that assist them in their caring role.
6. Promote digital services that carers can access, including access to government web platforms.

THEME 2 RECOGNITION AND AWARENESS

OUTCOMES – Carers feel their role is recognised by the community, the ACT Community has a greater awareness of carers and their valuable contribution to our community.

ACTION

7. Promote carers in the ACT during National Carers Week.
8. Deliver an annual event to celebrate the role and contribution of carers.
9. Develop and implement a communications strategy to promote awareness of carers in the community.

THEME 3 YOUNG CARERS

OUTCOMES – Young carers (up to 25 years) are supported to complete their education and achieve their aspirations, and Young carers are resilient and connected to their community.

ACTION

10. Identify and respond to young carers who require additional support in order to remain engaged in education or training.
11. Flexibly support young carers by collaboratively designing individualised learning pathways.
12. Collaborate to link existing programs in order to provide tailored support to meet the education and training needs of young carers.
13. Advocate for the provision of mental health and wellbeing support to young carers.

THEME 4 INCLUSION

OUTCOMES – Carers are engaged in government processes in areas that impact them, and carers' expertise is recognised in decision-making around the people they care for.

ACTION

14. Employ engagement approaches that enable participation by carers, including in policy development.

15. Seek input from carers on initiatives that promote the rights and inclusion of people with disability.

16. Include carers in consultation and planning for Better Suburbs.

17. Consider carer needs and engage carers in consultations for planning initiatives.

18. Identify barriers and explore options to:

- Acknowledge carers on health plans, including their role and support needs.
- Consider carers' needs during hospital discharge processes.

19. Conduct a carer impact assessment for the 'Hospital in the Home' initiative, to consider carers' needs and their role as part of the care team.

THEME 5 WORKFORCE AND SKILLS RECOGNITION

OUTCOMES – Carers' knowledge and skills are recognised in the workforce, and carers can balance workforce participation with their caring role.

ACTION

20. Assist carers to navigate the range of relevant, subsidised training opportunities and learning supports available in the ACT.

21. Ensure the views and training needs of carers in the Canberra community are represented during annual consultation on the ACT Skills Needs List.

22. Promote innovative adult community education projects designed to address barriers to carers' participation in vocational education and training (VET) and employment.

23. Promote carer access to services for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), migrant and refugee communities that build skills relevant to workforce participation.

24. Engage the Canberra Business Chamber and private sector to promote employment of carers and support for carer employees.

25. Develop standard wording around recognition and support of carers in the workplace to support advocacy work.

Each of these 25 actions have Lead and Support Agencies to support and deliver on the outcomes and priority of the ACT Carers Strategy.

3. Recommendations

That the ACT Government continues its investment in implementing the actions of the first Three-year Action Plan and resources Carers ACT to continue to lead the implementation. Carers ACT calls for an investment that demonstrates a commitment to supporting and enabling the near 50,000 carers in the ACT Community through a commitment of funding equivalent to \$10 per carer per year. This would equate to an investment of \$500,000 per annum to Carers ACT over 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 to implement the 25 actions in the first Three-Year Action Plan of the ACT Carer Strategy. This investment would enable Carers ACT to drive the policy and service changes required under the ACT Carers Strategy and assist the government to fulfil its commitment to carers.