

News Update

Dear carers,

In this news update from Carers ACT, you will find current information from the Aged Care sector relevant to your role as a carer of a person who is frail or aged. There is a section which looks into the findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care and the new ACT laws which have been put in place to protect vulnerable people, including people who are aged 60 and older. Essential information on the ongoing rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine in the aged care sector is also provided. We are likewise pleased to share information on our new respite care services, and the ongoing programs and supports that are available to you and the person you care for.

In this update you will find:

1. [Increased Respite Care Options with Carers ACT](#)
2. [Increased Supports for Carers of Aged People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds](#)
3. [Findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety](#)
4. [COVID - 19 Vaccine Rollout in Aged Care](#)
5. [COVID-19 Vaccines - Scams Information](#)
6. [2021 Flu Vaccination Update for visiting Residential Aged Care Facilities](#)

7. [New ACT Laws to Protect Vulnerable People](#)
8. [Older Persons Mental Health](#)
9. [Carers ACT Aged Care Supports and Programs](#)

Increased Respite Care Options with Carers ACT

We are very pleased to let you know that we have received additional funding from the Australian Government to grow our aged care respite services in 2021. This increased funding will enable us to open a second respite cottage and we have already located a suitable property in Issacs. We are in the process of furnishing the property and finding the right staff. We hope to have the cottage open for respite from June. The facility will provide accommodation for 4 individuals or couples overnight and up to an additional 10 during the day.

Our Deakin Cottage receives such positive feedback for its model of care, and we are excited to duplicate this at the Issacs property. We are looking forward to providing care based on building individual relationships with people who are aged and their family members. The nature of cottage respite allows for intimate personalised care and for participants to forge strong relationships with each other and the staff.

At the Issacs Cottage we are hoping to showcase some of the latest technological advances for in home care for people who are frail aged or have dementia. You will be able to come and test before you purchase and be supported to continue to provide care at home safely.

For more information on Cottage respite please speak to your care planner at Carers ACT. If you do not remember who that is or are new to Carers ACT, please call us on 6296 9900 and ask to speak to the aged care team.

Increased supports at Carers ACT for Carers of Aged People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

Carers ACT is pleased to announce that we have successfully received funds from the Federal Government to provide tailored respite care for carers of people who are frail aged and from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We are forging partnerships to identify needs and build social support groups that will provide a safe and culturally appropriate space for people who are frail aged to gather and enable carers to have a break. We will also be incorporating culturally safe respite into our new Cottage enabling people from the same cultural background to access respite together with suitable food and language speaking staff where possible.

Our Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) specific carer day groups will meet on a weekly basis. Participants will be able to speak in their language, participate in an exercise program, receive specialised talks from different community groups and enjoy a healthy cultural meal. We are currently working with the Indian and Sri Lankan communities to establish new groups and are seeking to connect with more CALD communities to establish additional culture specific day groups. To get more details on how to join an existing group, or if you would like to organise one for your community, call Triny Thomson at (02) 6296 9968 or email katrina.thomson@carersact.org.au.

Findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety - and what this means for carers

The findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care were in part a very difficult read. The commissioners did however recognise the important contribution that carers make to the lives of their loved ones and the impact it has on them as individuals. They really seemed to understand just how valuable carers are to the aged care system as a whole. We are very pleased that

appreciation of carers shone through in this dark inquiry.

Even more pleasing are some of the recommendations from the commissioners that will help carers. One of the recommendations was to make sure carers are identified during Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) assessments so that carers are supported earlier in their caring role. They also identified just how much red tape carers deal with and made suggestions for minimising particularly the duplication that is often required by carers.

We were particularly pleased that the commissioners understood the importance of respite and recommended to make it easier and more flexible to access. They also made recommendations about the quality of respite and acknowledged the particular importance of appropriate care of those whose loved ones are living with dementia.

We know you will be just as pleased as we were to hear that the commissioners support investigating and considering more deeply the leave arrangements for those employees providing care to their loved ones.

COVID - 19 Vaccine Rollout in Aged Care

Residential aged care residents and workers were among the first people in Australia to be offered a COVID-19 vaccine. This responsibility rests with the Department of Health i.e., the Commonwealth government, and is different to the rollout in the ACT community.

There are about 6,000 Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) in Australia. The Commonwealth government is providing vaccination teams called Vaccine Workforce Providers to provide the vaccine to all residents in these facilities.

The Residential aged care service providers have an important role in ensuring a safe rollout of COVID-19 vaccines and are required to prepare the facility, staff, and residents for vaccination day, obtain and record residents' consent, monitor and report adverse events, provide

information to their residents.

For more info go to: [COVID-19 vaccine information for aged care residents and people receiving in-home aged care | Australian Government Department of Health](#)

COVID-19 Vaccines – Scams Information

Covid-19 vaccines are being provided FREE of charge by the Australian Government. There have been instances of people being contacted by phone and asked to pay for a COVID-19 vaccine. Please be aware that this is a SCAM. If a person calls and asks for money for the vaccines – even if they say they are from ACT Health – do not provide any of your details. Take note of the number of the person calling and report it to the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission’s (ACCC) Scamwatch website at www.scamwatch.gov.au/report-a-scam, or you can call them on 1300 302 50.

2021 Flu Vaccination Update for visiting Residential Aged Care Facilities

A new public health direction was released on February 7th, 2021 regarding visiting aged care facilities. It states that the ACT Government requires volunteers and anybody working at an aged care residence to have an up-to-date flu vaccination. At this point however visitors, including regular visitors such as family and friend carers, are not currently required to have a flu vaccination prior to visiting an aged care facility.

Carers ACT has called several aged care residences and the advice varied from not having to have a flu vaccination, to having to have one if you come from a hotspot to it being mandatory to have one to enter their premises. We therefore advise that even though it is not compulsory according

to the ACT Government please check with the residence you wish to visit for their own individual requirements regarding flu vaccination.

To see the direction, visit: [Public Health \(Residential Aged Care Facilities\) Emergency Direction 2021 \(No 2\) | PDF \(act.gov.au\)](#)

New ACT Laws to Protect Vulnerable People

There will soon be some new laws in the ACT that you should know about. These relate to crimes against vulnerable people and for some of you the people you care for will come under these categories. The laws are designed to protect those with disability who are over the age of 18 and those over the age of 60 who are vulnerable.

As of 20 April 2021, it will be a crime if any carer (including those who are paid in support worker roles and those unpaid in family and friend carer roles) causes harm to the person they care for by either neglect or abuse. Please read this factsheet for more information about what is considered abuse and neglect and the penalties that apply.

The new laws will also make it illegal for a person in authority in an institution to fail to protect a vulnerable person in their care. These institutions include nursing and group homes. As a family carer you will be able to report concerns of a failure to protect the person to police and/or the Human Rights Commission.

Please remember that if you are feeling stressed in your caring role or need support you can call the Carer Gateway on 1800 422 737. Through the Carer Gateway you can access counselling, strategies to help with the caring role, emergency respite, coaching and join forums where you can connect with other carers. Carers ACT also runs several events and courses to support you. They can be found on the 'What's On' tab on our [website](#) or in our Group Programs email in your

inbox.

Older Persons Mental Health

The Older Persons Mental Health Community Team (OPMHCT) provides mental health assessment and care to people over the age of 65 years, with mental illness and issues of ageing (e.g., Dementia).

A model of care is under development to optimise the effectiveness and efficiency of this service, to ensure equitable access to older people needing specialist mental health services. They are interested to hear the experiences and perspectives of carers of older people accessing the Community Team programs.

- What is currently working well?
- What challenges or barriers have you experienced?
- What suggestions do you have to improve the consumer and carer journey?

You can give your feedback by contacting us at mhcarers@carersact.org.au or by filling out this [quick survey](#).

Carers ACT Aged Care Supports and Programs

Walking the Journey Together Respite Retreats

The *Walking the Journey Together* retreats are an innovative model of respite and social connection offering the chance for the carer, and the person cared for, to have a break together. The itinerary is flexible, designed to give carers a break during the day while the care recipient for is looked

after and engaged by trained staff. There are separate activities for both groups during the day and everyone meets together for meals. The couple remain as a couple overnight sharing the same room. Accommodation, meals, and activities are included and preorganised so that the carer does not have to undertake these tasks of daily living.

The program prioritizes and nurtures the relationship of the couple, providing respite from the caring role while nurturing the emotional wellbeing of the relationship between the carer and the frail aged person. During the retreat, carers attend educative workshops, relaxation and stress management activities and are encouraged to build social connections with each other. Equally the person being cared for is supported to engage in new activities such as croquet, cards, gardening etc. and build social interactions.

Carers who have attended the retreats have loved the opportunity and valued the break they have had whilst also spending quality time with their partner or parent. Retreats are in high demand with many seeing this as a preferred form of respite as it does not require a separation from each other.

Retreats are held regularly in hotels around Canberra and in the Illawarra. If you and the person you care for would like some time away together with support and in a group that understands and is accepting of the caring role, aging and dementia please contact Sonia on 6296 9982 or by emailing group.programs@carersact.org.au.

Aged Care Education Sessions

Carers ACT offers a range of education workshops focusing specifically on Aged Care, to equip carers with essential skills and knowledge that will be useful in their caring role.

To learn more about these sessions and see our full list of educational and social activity please refer to our website: carersact.org.au/events or contact Tracey on 6296 9982 or by emailing group.programs@carersact.org.au.

Social and Respite Activities for carers of people who are frail aged

Keep an eye out for the Carers ACT weekly What's On email. The email is packed with a range of social and recreational activities designed for carers of people who are aged. Activities range from lunch and high tea to craft, art, and gardening. For more information email

group.programs@carersact.org.au

OT Assessments & Equipment

Did you know Carers ACT provides assistance with OT assessments and equipment purchasing? If you are a carer and/or a care recipient, you may be eligible for services under CHSP if you do not have a Home Care Package and are:

- Aged over 65 years or 50 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- Connected with My Aged Care and hold CHSP codes for Goods and Equipment or Allied Health
- Living at home and residing in the ACT
- In need of help to continue to live independently

Carers ACT can provide information and support to access My Aged Care for the first time if needed or assist with gaining the right codes.

CHSP Goods and Equipment provides assistance with purchasing equipment up to the value of \$500 and client experiencing financial hardship will be prioritised.

CHSP Allied Health provides assistance for a one-off Occupational Therapy (OT) assessment. This assessment is often completed in your own home to identify safety concerns. Please note, Carers ACT cannot provide assistance with home modification such as rails.

Please call the Carers ACT Aged Care team on 6296 9922 to discuss your personal circumstances.

If assistance is required, you will be linked to a Care Planner who will support you as required.

My Aged Care can be contacted directly on 1800 200 422.

CHSP Flexible Respite

CHSP Flexible Respite provides assistance for carers and allows carers to have a short break.

You may be eligible for CHSP Flexible Respite if you are:

- Aged over 65 years or 50 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- Be connected with My Aged Care and hold CHSP codes for Flexible Respite
- Be living at home
- Reside in the ACT

Some examples of Flexible Respite supports that we can offer:

- A support worker to support the person you care for to attend medical appointments
- Assistance in your home such as cooking and cleaning
- Personal care for the person you care for
- A support worker to stay with the person you care for while you take a break or attend an appointment

To discuss your personal circumstances, receive assistance to access My Aged Care or assistance to seek the referral codes needed, please contact 6296 9922 to speak to our aged care team. The Carer Gateway can also provide this assistance plus much more by calling 1800 422 737.

Home Care Packages

The Home Care Packages (HCP) team is revamped for 2021 and we have a new team of enthusiastic and qualified care planners. The HCP team has vacancies and is currently engaged in signing new carers as they continue providing quality services to existing consumers, reviewing consumers requirements, and providing information to those who are looking into or have an existing home care packages. For more information on eligibility and assistance with home care packages, contact the HCP Team at (02) 6296 9922 or email hcp@carersact.org.au.



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