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**From:**

Carers ACT Communications Department

## News Update - Disability Edition

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### A Message from our CEO

Dear carers,

Welcome to 2021!

So far, we are certainly off to a calmer start to the year. By this time last year we had already been through the smoke, fires and hail, so anything in comparison is likely to feel calm!

This year we are hoping to streamline our newsletters by targeting particular groups of carers, for example, this disability edition targeting carers of people with a disability (including psychosocial disability). This way we can direct information so you are receiving things relevant and available to you. If you care for multiple people, you may end up with multiple editions, but we will spread them out so they are not coming all at once.

As an update on Carers ACT, our staff are continuing to work from both home and our offices. This way we can engage with you depending on how you want to, in person, on the phone, via video conference, while also doing our bit to keep everyone safe. Our group education, wellbeing and social groups are all running with access both online and in person. We are offering counselling in person, over the phone or via video conferencing and we are still able to support you to take a break or explore ways to reduce stress and enhance wellbeing. If you haven't connected with us in a while, when you ring we will offer you the chance to talk through the areas of your life as a carer that are concerning you or causing stress, and then work together to identify and support actions and/or resources that aim to lower the stress (for example respite or counselling or a peer support group or help to prepare for a job interview, information on NDIS, help with budgeting etc).

I encourage you to take 5 minutes where you can to have a 'mini' break and focus on doing something that helps with your wellbeing. It has been a rough year and carers more than anyone need to try to prioritise your wellbeing so you can continue to care. Try a 5 min breathing meditation, standing on the grass with your shoes off, taking a close up photo of something, making a phone call or dancing to a song. It will make a huge difference to your wellbeing. If you are up for more, have a look at the activities we have on offer and keep an eye out as we roll out even more activities and

programs on wellbeing over the next couple of months. If you need some replacement care to attend, let us know.

We are watching the anticipated rollout of the COVID vaccination and will let you know when we have official information on the process for receiving the vaccination. We anticipate people with disability will be prioritised and we have asked the Health Minister to consider prioritising carers as well.

Enjoy the lovely weather we are having.

Regards

**Lisa Kelly**

Chief Executive Officer

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## **Carers Needs Assessment Update**

The Capital Health Network (CHN), ACT's primary health network, in partnership with Carers ACT has launched a survey to update the ACT Carers Needs Assessment. The aim of this 10-minute survey is to inform CHN of the experiences of carers, and to provide an accurate picture of their current needs. This survey is important as it will identify health needs and responses, and the information gathered will inform decisions and direct service planning in the ACT. Have your say before the survey closes on 5 Feb.

Click [here](#) to complete the survey.

## **Person-centred Emergency Preparedness Planning for COVID-19**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, continuing to provide care to someone living with a disability if you were to become unwell, has been on many carers' minds. A great way to ensure you are prepared and have a plan is to use the [Person-centred Emergency Preparedness Planning for COVID-19](#). This guide has been developed in collaboration with interstate partners as part of the ACT Government COVID-19 Disability Strategy.

If you have not received a copy or wish to receive another copy, please call Carers ACT on 6296 9900 and speak to Rochelle. You can also email [carers@carersact.org.au](mailto:carers@carersact.org.au) or download a copy [here](#).

If you need assistance in filling out the plan, please give us a call and we will be happy to help.

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## **NDIS Community Connector**

Carers ACT has funding until June 2021 to support carers of adults living with a disability to connect with the NDIS, if the person you care for does not currently have an NDIS plan. Carers ACT will assist you with the application process and the collection of the evidence required. Our support staff can accompany you to appointments and link you to various carer supports.

To be eligible for this program: You, the carer must be over 65 years of age, or 50 and over if you are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; you must be caring for an adult living with a disability who is under the age of 65 and doesn't have an NDIS plan; and you must be a resident of the ACT.

If you wish to access this service, please contact Mercedes (NDIS Carer Connector) on 6296 9908 or email [Mercedes.Dent@carersact.org.au](mailto:Mercedes.Dent@carersact.org.au) for more details.

## **NDIS Support Coordination**

Do you have an NDIS plan? Carers ACT can support you to get the most out of your NDIS plan and empower you to choose the services best able to meet your needs. Our support coordinators will link you up with the service providers you choose, help you navigate the disability sector and coordinate your informal, funded and mainstream supports. We will also monitor progress towards your goals to assist you in future planning and assist you in managing the financial aspects of your NDIS plan.

We take direction from you about how you want to manage your plan. You might choose to allocate some responsibilities to us, while you take others - the choice is yours. Together, we can work toward your goals.

If you would like more information on how Carers ACT can provide your Support Coordination, please contact us on 6296 9900 or email [disability@carersact.org.au](mailto:disability@carersact.org.au).

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## **Factsheet: How to Write a Carer Statement**

We have written a short factsheet to help you write a Carer Statement for your care recipient's NDIS access or planning meeting. Carer Statements are a way for you to tell the NDIS how caring impacts you and how support could improve things.

Download the factsheet [here](#).

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## **The Hub Disability Program**

As a registered NDIS provider, Carers ACT offers a suite of services to support family carers and the person living with a disability. We operate two independent living skills programs for people aged 18-40 years of age with a moderate cognitive disability. These programs aim to enhance each person's social and life skills, develop interests

and abilities and to participate in the community. Supports provided are tailored to each participant's individual needs, interests and goals.

Our **Group Community Access and Living Skills Program** is delivered at The Hub in the northern suburb of Holt. It includes activities which are interactive and adapted to the participant's abilities and interests such as growing and cooking with their own ingredients, music, yoga, photography, dance, gym, walking, art and craft.

Our **Independent Living Skills Program** is an individual support offered either at the participant's home, in the community or a combination of both.

All enquiries can be directed to Carers ACT on [6296 9900](tel:62969900), email [disability@carersact.org.au](mailto:disability@carersact.org.au) or visit our [website](#).

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## **Respite Effect and Recovery Grants**

The ACT Government Office for Disability is offering support for people with disability, and their carers, through a one-off grant of up to \$500, called the **Respite Effect and Recovery Grants**.

These grants are designed to alleviate some of the accumulated pressures of 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic. They aim to support recovery and provide some relief for households who continue to experience the consequences of reduced social inclusion and accumulated stressors.

Items funded through this grant include accommodation for time away; a subscription (online, magazine or newspaper); domestic assistance; spring clean; garden maintenance; data or an electronic device; food (either through delivery, dining in or as take away); or support towards a hobby or interest.

For more information on how you can access these grants, contact the Office for Disability via email at [officefordisability@act.gov.au](mailto:officefordisability@act.gov.au).

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## **Disability Gateway Launch**

The Disability Gateway launched this week and will assist all people with disability, their families and carers to locate and access services across Australia. This Australian Government initiative will provide health and wellbeing advice, information on aids and equipment and access to income and finance supports.

Visit [Disability Gateway](#) or call the dedicated Disability Gateway phone line on 1800 643 787 to find out more.

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## **NDIS Access and Planning Consultation**

The National Disability Insurance Agency is inviting all ACT participants (or people considering seeking access to the NDIS) and their families and carers to a consultation session to talk about the proposed changes to access and planning, including Independent Assessments. The consultation will be held online on 3 February from 10am to 12pm.

View the [consultation flyer](#) for more information.

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## **Evoenergy Research Interviews**

[Evoenergy](#), an ACT electricity and gas distributor, is conducting stakeholder interviews with carers, to better understand the impact of their services on customers requiring

electrically powered life support equipment. The research will focus on the experience of planned and unplanned electricity outages. Interviews can be conducted via phone, online or face-to-face. A \$20 gift card will be offered in appreciation of each interview.

If you would like to participate, email [consumerfeedback@evoenergy.com.au](mailto:consumerfeedback@evoenergy.com.au) with your contact details.

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## **Hoyts Cinemas \$1.00 Movie Deals for Carers**

Hoyts Australia has renewed its agreement with Carers Australia to offer a discount to carers who attend movie sessions with the person they care for.

When a carer attends any Australian Hoyts cinema with the person they care for, they can purchase a ticket for just \$1.00. Just present your valid Healthcare card, Centrelink pension card or other government issued and recognised carer identification to take advantage of this offer. Find your local Hoyts cinema at [www.hoyts.com.au/cinemas](http://www.hoyts.com.au/cinemas).

[Terms and conditions](#) apply.

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## **New Mental Health Carers Voice Facebook Page**

We've started a Facebook page so that we can provide you with more regular updates and connect with more carers out in the community. To help us get established, we'd appreciate it if you could like the page and share it with your friends.

Find us at [facebook.com/mhcarersact](https://facebook.com/mhcarersact).



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