

Carers recognised in law for the first time in the ACT

Carers ACT, together with the entire ACT carer community, celebrates the passage of the ACT Carers Recognition Act into law today with the unanimous support of the Legislative Assembly. This is an important milestone for the ACT as we join the rest of the nation's states and territories in having a law that formally recognises the rights of carers and the valuable role that they play within our community. The Carers Recognition Act is a huge step in making the ACT community more inclusive as it establishes a set of principles which entities and organisations in the ACT will uphold to support the rights of carers and the responsibilities they have in their caring relationships.

"This is welcome news for more than 50,000 family and friend carers in the ACT who provide daily assistance to people living with disability, a medical condition, a chronic or terminal illness, a mental illness or a person who is frail and aged. Carers are some of the most selfless people in our community and yet much of what they do often goes unrecognised.

The recent report from the first National Carer Wellbeing Survey highlighted the urgent call for us to address needs of carers in the ACT. More than 50% of carers in the ACT reported having poor general health and low levels of wellbeing as a result of their caring role. The Carers Recognition Act will be instrumental in paving the way for us to see a reversal of these trends." said Ms. Lisa Kelly, CEO of Carers ACT.

"In our daily conversations with carers, we often hear how they feel invisible, isolated and overwhelmed by the responsibilities related to their caring role. The Carers Recognition Act will ensure that carers' needs and voices will be better considered in employment, health, education, community planning and service delivery. More importantly, it will install the necessary measures and business practices to support the wellbeing of carers and enable them to perform their role in a more sustainable way." Ms. Kelly said.

"I would like to thank the 50,000 carers in the ACT for everything they do every day. I would especially like to thank those carers who have been strong advocates for change, who have spoken with passion and conviction, who have paved the way for the ACT Carers Recognition Act. The reward today is yours and I thank you for your contributions." Ms. Kelly said.

Carers ACT would like to acknowledge Ms. Suzanne Orr MLA who authored and sponsored the bill and has been a long-time supporter and advocate for carers. We would also like to thank Minister Emma Davidson for being a champion for carers, and the members of the Legislative Assembly for their support. Both Ms. Orr and Minister Davidson have expressed their continued commitment to upholding the rights of carers and working towards better outcomes.

“I would like to thank all the hard work Carers ACT do and for their help in preparing the Carers Recognition Act 2021. Carers ACT helped provide recommendations to make the Act as inclusive and supportive as possible, for all carers throughout Canberra. Growing up I saw my parents care for hundreds of foster children, some for a little while and some for a long time. It instilled in me the need to look out for one another and a deep appreciation for the work our carers do for our community”, said Ms. Suzanne Orr MLA.

“Carers play such an important role supporting people in our community. This important legislation will acknowledge the immense contribution carers make across the ACT and empower organisations to deeply listen to and be more responsive to the needs of carers. I look forward to working with the community to implement this legislation and drive better outcomes for our carers.” said Minister Emma Davidson.

In 2017, Carers ACT embarked on a partnership with the ACT Government to develop the ACT Carers Strategy, a 10-year plan to make Canberra more inclusive and carer friendly. The passage of the Carers Recognition Act is a crucial step towards achieving this vision, as it promotes accountability across organisations and entities in the ACT toward our commitment to supporting and empowering carers.

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