



Department of Health
Government of Western Australia

Carers' Action Plan

for Western Australia 2004-2007

WA AGED CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL

2004-2007

Message from the Chairperson

The WA Aged Care Advisory Council is committed to building upon the foundation work of the *State Aged Care Plan for Western Australia 2003-2008*. It gives me great pleasure to fulfil this commitment with the *Carers' Action Plan 2004-2007* which centres on informal carers in our community.

The strength of the Carers' Action Plan is its clear intention to concentrate on the thousands of people who are unpaid for the care they give to family members, relatives or friends over a period of time. The contribution that unpaid carers make to individuals, to our community, and to strengthening and supporting our health and aged care systems, should be acknowledged and applauded. Collectively the community must recognise the role of carers and help carers to sustain their capacity to continue caring.

In promoting the person-centred approach of the State Aged Care Plan, the Carers' Action Plan is anchored in the view that carers are individuals endeavouring to manage their own personal needs and aspirations as well as trying to meet the competing demands they face as carers. Carers who take care of elderly people often have to juggle many roles, both at home and at work, while they cope with the physical and emotional demands of being a carer. The needs of carers may change over time as the needs of the person being cared for become more intense. The diversity of informal carers and an array of different cultural contexts add another layer to caring in the community. Added to this complex mosaic, are the many carers who may not identify themselves as such, and are often socially isolated.

Our challenge is to develop flexible supports and services that help carers to continue in their caring role for as long as they wish. As our population ages, we know that the role of informal carers in the community will become even more important. It is imperative that these exceptional people can rely on a strong support system.

My thanks go to the WA Aged Care Advisory Council, the Carers' Working Group, and the many other committed people who contributed so generously to the Carers' Action Plan. I look forward with enthusiasm to achieving its outcomes.

Dr Penny Flett

Chairperson, WA Aged Care Advisory Council

The need for a Carers' Action Plan

In 2003, there were approximately 493,000 voluntary or informal primary carers across Australia, with the number estimated to reach 574,000 by 2013.¹ The largest increase is likely to occur among older carers, to levels where at least one in three primary carers in Australia will be aged 60 years or more.² These numbers do not include the significant number of 'hidden' carers who do not identify themselves as 'carers'. Informal carers are considered to be the major providers of care in the community, delivering 74% of all services to people needing care and support in Australia at the present time.³

Carers in Western Australia represent 11% of the State's population with around 200,000 people providing care, although not all care is for older people.⁴ The adjoining table suggests that informal care in Western Australia is provided predominantly by female carers.⁵ The research literature also suggests that the typical profile

PRIMARY CARERS IN WA, 1998 ('000)		
Age Group	Male	Female
18-24	-	-
25-34	1.2	5.9
35-44	2.1	4.0
45-54	1.7	6.2
55-64	1.7	4.4
65-74	2.4	1.3
75+	2.4	-
Total	12.0	23.3

of a carer of an older person in Western Australia is female, with the majority in the 45-64 years age group.⁶ These carers are likely to be juggling family, social and possibly work commitments with little opportunity to take a break from the demands of the caring role. An emerging trend is the greater number of male carers in the 64 years and over age group.

Informal carers are not a homogeneous group. Research indicates that carers of older people may range from husbands and wives, sons and daughters, ageing parents with adult children who may have disabilities, older carers looking after ageing parents, carers from rural and remote areas, carers from diverse ethnic and cultural groups, to carers of older relatives, friends and neighbours who may also be looking after their own family.

The need to develop flexible and targeted programs for carers of older people will be driven by an increasingly ageing population and an ageing carer population coupled with the diverse needs of informal carers and the people they care for.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004, *Future Supply of Informal Care 2003-2013*, Media Release May 2004

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004, *ibid.*

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004, *Facts about Carers in Australia*, AIHW, Canberra.

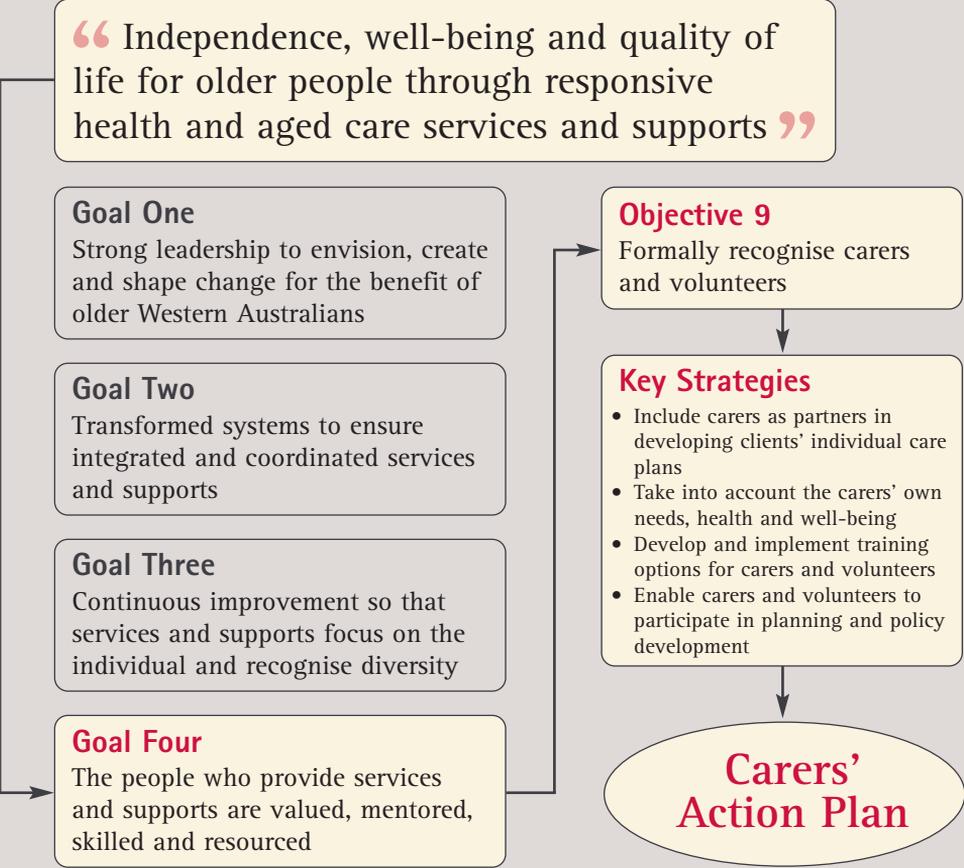
⁴ Delaney Woods & Associates 2004, *Overview of Literature and Research into Aged Care Caregivers*.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998, *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary Tables, Western Australia*, Cat. No. 4430.5.40.001, Table 21, ABS, Canberra.

⁶ Delaney Woods & Associates 2004, *op. cit.*

The Carers' Action Plan fits within the strategic framework of the *State Aged Care Plan for Western Australia 2003-2008* and is aligned with its Vision, Values and Goals:

Vision



Values

- Aged care is about the person, both the individual and their family (of origin, or choice) and carers and is built on participation and respect
- Aged care is positive and enabling with service delivery based on flexibility and choice
- Equity and inclusion are fundamental
- Quality systems are fundamental

Developing the Carers' Action Plan

The Carers' Working Group was established under the auspices of the WA Aged Care Advisory Council, to develop a Carers' Action Plan that would achieve Goal Four of the State Aged Care Plan and Objective Nine to "formally recognise carers and volunteers".

A member of the Advisory Council, Ms Jenni Perkins, Director Policy Planning and Information, Disability Services Commission, convened the Working Group. The Working Group members were extremely generous with their time and commitment to the development of the Action Plan. The members included Ms Noreen Fynn, Executive Director, Carers WA, Mrs Ellen Walker, a member of the Board of Carers WA and a consumer representative, Ms Judith Chernysh, Disability Services Commission, Ms Helen Joyce, Office for Seniors' Interests, Ms Ruth Letts, Executive Director Nursing, Fremantle Hospital, Mr Frank Schaper, Chief Executive Officer, Alzheimer's Australia WA, Ms Janice Cutting, WA Network of Community Based Home Care Services, Ms Anne Riordan, Senior Planning Officer, Clinical and Aged Care Directorate, Department of Health and Ms Julie Collings, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

The Working Group drew on the results of the extensive statewide consultations that informed the development of the State Aged Care Plan. From the outset, it was felt that the issues and needs of carers warranted a separate Action Plan rather than a combined Carers and Volunteers Action Plan as stated in Objective Nine. The Working Group was also clear from the outset that this Action Plan should focus on the needs of "informal carers", that is, on the enormous number of dedicated carers in the community who provide the majority of support to people who need care on a regular basis without payment and over a sustained period of time.

An extensive literature survey was commissioned by Carers WA that examined both national and international literature and the wealth of research studies and surveys that exist on carers to assist in the development of a framework for the Plan. A series of workshops followed, leading to the identification of five key action areas, as follows:

- Recognition
- Health and well-being
- Community support services
- Education, training and information
- Research and policy development

A vast amount of work outside the Working Group also contributed to the development of the Action Plan, with many people providing their expertise and time. The final Carers' Action Plan was presented to the WA Aged Care Advisory Council in August 2004.

Recognition

Aim To give recognition to carers, their valued role, and their needs

Actions

- Fulfil the commitment to introduce legislation to formally recognise carers
- Increase service providers' and support organisations' awareness, recognition and understanding of the role of carers
- Develop and promote initiatives that help people to identify themselves as having a caring role
- Promote and implement workplace policies which support carers in their caring role

Outcomes

- Carers are recognised formally through legislation
- Service providers and support organisations are responsive to carers and recognise their skills and expertise
- Carers identify themselves as carers and access support services earlier to help them sustain their caring role
- Carers are able to maintain their participation in the workforce as well as have a caring role

Health and well-being

Aim To optimise carers' health and well-being

Actions

- Support initiatives to encourage carers to protect their own health and well-being and minimise their social isolation
- Facilitate access for all carers to information, respite and support services relevant to their needs
- Develop initiatives to assist the carer when there is a need to arrange different levels of care or different care or accommodation settings for the person being cared for
- Promote initiatives to reduce the financial impact of caring on carers

Outcomes

- Carers are physically and emotionally equipped to carry out the caring role
- Carers are able to access services appropriate to their needs regardless of their geographic location
- Carers are well-equipped and supported to handle change when those being cared for need to move through different transition points across the continuum of care
- Improved financial circumstances, well-being and quality of life for carers

Community support services

Aim To improve community services and supports for carers and their families

Actions

- Community care service providers and support organisations recognise and address the diversity of carers and design services around individual carer needs
- Provide a broad range of services, including flexible respite services in accordance with the identified needs of carers
- Develop and provide a range of flexible training programs for the community care workforce to identify, assess and support informal carers

Outcomes

- Community care services are responsive to the individual support needs of carers
- Support services are tailored to meet individual needs and enhance the capacity of carers to sustain the caring role
- Community care workers are suitably trained to identify and support informal carers

Education, training and information

Aim To enhance carers' capacity and confidence in their caring role

Actions

- Provide accurate, timely and accessible information about supports and services for carers throughout the different stages of caring
- Provide training opportunities that resource carers to increase their confidence and capacity to carry out their caring role
- Provide training for health and aged care service providers regarding the diversity of carers, carer roles, and carer needs across the continuum of care

Outcomes

- Carers are informed throughout the different stages of caring about the range of supports and services available and how to access them
- Carers are appropriately skilled to fulfil and sustain the caring role
- Service providers are able to respond to the specific support and health needs of the carer when a person receiving informal care needs to move from one level of care to another, or to transfer to a different care or accommodation setting

Research and policy development

Aim Ensure that policy is informed by appropriate research and is evidence based

Actions

- Raise the profile of carers as a research priority
- Increase collaboration and partnerships between research bodies, carer organisations and service providers when determining research priorities
- Include carers as key stakeholders in the development of policies
- Promote research and development of evidence-based models of service delivery that are innovative and flexible

Outcomes

- Carer issues and service models are a research priority
- Research priorities are determined through collaboration between key stakeholders
- Carers are engaged in policy development
- A strong research base supports innovation in service delivery models to support carers

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Actions for Implementation

Actions		Opportunities	Phased Implementation		
			2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Recognition	Fulfil the commitment to introduce legislation to formally recognise carers	Department of Health to recommend to Minister for Health to support legislation at Cabinet level			
	Increase service providers' and support organisations' awareness, recognition and understanding of the role of carers	Target opportunities in the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program growth funding cycle			
	Develop and promote initiatives that help people to identify themselves as having a caring role				
	Promote and implement workplace policies which support carers in their caring role	Department of Health to support across-government initiatives that support carers in the health system workplace			
Health and Well-being	Support initiatives to encourage carers to protect their health and well-being and minimise social isolation	Target opportunities in the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program growth funding cycle, particularly those which address the interface between the acute public hospital and transition to the community			
	Facilitate access for all carers to information, respite and support services relevant to their needs				
	Develop initiatives to assist the carer when there is a need to arrange different levels of care or different care or accommodation settings for the person being cared for	Target opportunities for the Department of Health and the Australian government to work collaboratively on carer issues that arise at the interface between different levels of care, care settings and accommodation types			
	Promote initiatives to reduce the financial impact of caring on carers	Department of Health to support across-government initiatives at the state and federal level to reduce the financial impact of caring			
Community Support Services	Community care service providers and support organisations recognise and address the diversity of carers and design services around individual carer needs	Target opportunities in the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program growth funding cycle			
	Provide a broad a range of services, including flexible respite services in accordance with the identified needs of carers	HACC service providers to review existing service delivery models and explore potential for remodelling of services to better meet the needs of carers			
	Develop and provide a range of training programs for the community care workforce to identify, assess and support informal carers	Target opportunities in the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program growth funding cycle			
Education, Training and Information	Provide accurate, timely and accessible information about supports and services for carers throughout the different stages of caring	Target opportunities in the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program growth funding cycle			
	Provide training opportunities that resource carers to increase their confidence and capacity to carry out their caring role				
	Provide training for health and aged care service providers regarding the diversity of carers, carer roles and carer needs				
Research and Policy Development	Raise the profile of carers as a research priority	Department of Health to participate on research institution boards and advisory bodies			
	Increase collaboration and partnerships between research bodies, carer organisations and service providers when determining research priorities	Department of Health to support funding applications for research that demonstrate a partnership approach between research and carer organisations and service providers			
	Include carers as key stakeholders in the development of policies	Department of Health to support implementation of the Carers' Recognition Bill			
	Promote research and development of evidence-based models of service delivery targeted at carers that are innovative and flexible	Target opportunities in the HACC Program growth funding cycle "Expression of Interest" (EOI) process			

WA Aged Care Advisory Council

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