



POSITION STATEMENT

Carer's Recognition



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1. Introduction

Carers play an integral role in the aged and disability support sectors in Australia. The importance of the role of carers and the issues they face have gained greater prominence over the past decade. While Helping Hand has provided support and recognition to the role of carers to date, eg through specific service provision such as respite and carer support; through carer involvement in development and delivery of services, recent reports and legislation indicate that it is timely to revisit our approach to recognition and support of carers. In developing our response, our commitment and focus will have three key components

1. Request for recognition of carers rights, choices and opportunities.
2. Valuing and recognition of the role of carers in society
3. Partnership with carers in the provision of care.

2. Context

In 2009, 2.6 million people provided informal care to people who needed help because of disability or dependency related to ageing. Nearly one third of these (29%) were primary carers ie people who provided the majority of the informal help needed. Over two-thirds of primary carers (68%) were women (ABS 2011). In addition:

- / 239,400 (32%) of primary carers provided care to people over 65 (ABS 2004)
- / over half of these carers were aged between 35 and 64 years
- / 620,000 carers (24%) were born outside Australia
- / Of those born outside Australia, 366,700 (59%) were born in other than main English-speaking countries.

The Productivity Commission (2011) found that family members and other informal carers provide most of the care for older people. At the same time, they found that the relative availability of informal carers will decline into the future, reducing the ability of some older people to receive home based care.



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While there can be a positive side to being a carer such as a sense of purpose which builds self esteem (Productivity Commission 2011), there also are negative consequences which can erode these benefits. In particular

- / Carers have the lowest level of wellbeing of any group of people measured
- / The wellbeing of carers decreases linearly as the number of hours spent caring increases
- / Carers are more likely than is normal to be experiencing chronic pain
- / Carers are likely to have an injury and this is associated with reduced wellbeing
- / Carers have an average rating on the depression scale that is classified as moderate depression, and over one third are classified as having severe or extremely severe depression
- / Carers are not receiving appropriate treatment for themselves as they have no time or they cannot afford the treatment. (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth 2009).

3. Legislative Environment

Legislation has been introduced at both Commonwealth and State Government levels aimed at providing formal recognition of carers and their role in society and ensuring carers receive support to undertake their caring role (SA Carers Recognition Act 2005 and Commonwealth Carer Recognition Act 2010). Further, the legislation introduces accountability measures to apply to public service and publically funded organisations to ensure that their policies and practices reflect the principles in the relevant legislation. The two pieces of legislation are broadly consistent and provide an excellent platform on which Helping Hand can build a comprehensive response to the needs of carers.

Specifically, drawing on the SA Carers Charter (Schedule 1 of the SA Carers Recognition Act 2005) and the Statement for Australia's Carers (Commonwealth Carer Recognition Act 2010), we can identify principles for action which will underpin the actions we will undertake against the three key components of Recognition, Valuing and Partnership.

4 Definition

A carer is any person who provides unpaid support (eg personal care, household assistance) to someone who needs this kind of help as a consequence of disability, a medical condition (including a terminal or chronic illness), mental illness or the ageing process. This broad definition is not restricted by age, gender or relationship to the person who needs assistance and is based on the definitions in the Commonwealth and State legislation.

People who are not carers, for the purpose of this Position Statement, are people who are under a contract for services, volunteers or people undertaking training or education.



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5. Recognition and support of carers rights, choices and opportunities

Principles:

1. We recognise that all carers have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians, regardless of age, race, sex, disability, sexuality, religious or political beliefs, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, cultural or linguistic differences, socioeconomic status or locality
2. We recognise that children and young people who are carers have the same rights as all children and young people and:
 - / they will be supported in their right to enjoy life, to reach their potential,
 - / their unique barriers to access service provision will be recognised and acted on so that as far as is possible, they have the same opportunities as other children and young people
 - / we will seek, as much as possible to minimise their caring responsibilities and support them to reach their full potential
3. Carers will be specifically identified and supported:
 - / in the choices they make in their caring role
 - / to enjoy optimum health and social wellbeing
 - / to participate in family, social and community life
 - / to achieve greater economic wellbeing and sustainability and, where appropriate, should have opportunities to participate in employment and education
4. Support for carers will be timely, responsive, appropriate and accessible, recognising that:
 - / Carers need access to a wide range of responsive, affordable services to ensure informed decision making and support for them in their caring situations
 - / Carers from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds may have complex needs that require appropriate service delivery
 - / Carers in rural and remote communities may have other specific barriers to service provision
5. Carers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need specific consideration,
 - / they will be specifically identified and supported within and outside their communities
 - / they will be provided with culturally appropriate support services that take into account the history, health and well-being of their extended families.



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6 Valuing and recognition of the role of carers in society

Principles

1. The valuable social and economic contribution that carers make to society will be recognised and supported
2. Additionally, carers themselves will be recognised and valued for their important contribution to the wellbeing of the Australian community
3. Carers will be recognised for their unique experience and knowledge in the caring role.
4. Carers' health and wellbeing is critical to the community. As such:
 - / Carers are entitled to enjoy optimum health, social, spiritual and economic well-being and to participate in family, social and community life, employment and education
 - / Carers will be supported to balance their caring role with their own needs.

7. Partnerships with carers in the provision of care

Principles:

1. Caring is a social and public responsibility shared by individuals, families, businesses and community organisations, public institutions and all levels of Government.
2. Carers will be acknowledged as individuals with their own needs within and beyond the caring role
3. The relationship between carers, and the persons for whom they care, will be recognised and respected
4. Carers are partners with us in the provision of care and we need to acknowledge their unique knowledge and experience. We will recognise the important role of carers by including carers in the assessment, planning, delivery and review of services that impact on them in their role as carers.
5. Carers will be treated with dignity and respect.



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