

# Supplementary evidence to the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers

## Introduction

Carers Australia has provided two written submissions to the Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers (the Inquiry) being undertaken by the Australian Government Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs (the Committee).

Carers Australia's former Chief Executive Officer, Alison Brook, and Senior Policy Officer, Sue Elderton, appeared before the Committee on 8 August 2023, and presented evidence on the history and purpose of Carers Australia and the *Commonwealth Carer Recognition Act 2010* (the Act).

Further to this evidence, Carers Australia submits this supplement to the information already provided to the Committee.

## Supplementary evidence for questions posed to Carers Australia

### *What is the primary role of Carers Australia?*

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing Australia's unpaid carers, advocating on their behalf to influence policies and services at a national level. Our vision is an Australia that values and supports the contribution carers make to the people they care for and to the community as a whole. Our Constitution outlines our objectives as:

- To advocate for policy and service actions that support the caring role and enhance the health, wellbeing, resilience and financial security of carers
- To advocate for the inclusion of carers as a priority group within mainstream and specialist service programs
- To advocate to have caring recognised as a shared responsibility of family, community, business and government with the aim of achieving improved outcomes for carers
- To undertake other policy, advocacy and service actions which the Board considers to be of benefit to carers.

### *How does Carers Australia advocate?*

Carers Australia advocates on a wide range of issues that affect carers, to influence national policy and services.

Carers Australia works collaboratively with other organisations, including our network of state and territory carer organisations, to develop policies, programs, services, and events to improve the lives of Australia's carers – supporting them, and upholding their rights.

Carers Australia engages in Federal Government consultations and provides submissions to both Parliamentary and Departmental Inquiries into matters which affect carers, and to departmental consultations in relation to aged care, disability care, social security eligibility requirements and payments for both carers and for those whom they care.

Carers Australia commissions research to strengthen the evidence base of carer issues and uses this data to inform our policy positions.

In addition to the 20 submissions to Government and parliamentary committees in 2023, Carers Australia provides representation for carers on over 30 committees across the health, aged care, disability, and social and community services sectors.

Media and communication activities include raising awareness of current and emerging issues that affect carers and includes issuing media releases, speaking at events, appearing on radio and TV media and in print, as well as using online platforms that highlight the role and needs of carers.

Carers Australia also delivers funded programs which offer a range of activities related to carers or a specific carer cohort. These include promoting carer inclusive workplaces, upskilling women carers to increase participation in paid work, awareness raising for defence and carers of veterans, and providing financial assistance to enable eligible young carers return to or continue with their education.

#### *How does Carers Australia interact with carers?*

Carers Australia has established channels of communication and works collaboratively with our members who are the peak carer organisations in each state and territory. Collectively we form the National Carer Network (NCN). Each member of the NCN undertakes grassroots engagement with lived-experience carers. Additionally, Carers Australia maintains several advisory groups of carers to inform the development and execution of each of our programs.

#### *How is Carers Australia funded?*

The majority of Carers Australia's revenue comes from Government.

#### *How does one become a member of Carers Australia?*

Under our Constitution, Carers Australia has eight members. It is a federated model with a representative from each state and territory carer organisation. In addition, the Constitution does not allow for additional members.

#### *Describe the nature of the structure of Carers Australia?*

Carers Australia is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001, and as such does not have any shareholders.

#### *Do you have any other organisations similar to Carers Australia in the carers field?*

Carers Australia is the national peak organisation representing Australia's unpaid carers. Our members, the National Carer Network, all undertake advocacy or service delivery targeted at carers in their state or territory.

Likewise, there are a range of other organisations engaging in carer policy, advocacy or service delivery with whom Carers Australia regularly engages.

#### *How does Carers Australia support carers?*

Carers Australia is not a service delivery organisation. Our purpose is to support carers through raising awareness and advocating on their behalf to influence policies and services at a national level.



Carers Australia's Young Carer Bursary Program is the only program in which we provide individual support directly to carers. This program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and administered by Carers Australia

Other ways in which Carers Australia provide direct support to carers is by our ongoing promotion of and signposting to carer support services.

*Is it part of Carers Australia's charter to promote or raise awareness of the act?*

Carers Australia's Constitution does not specifically refer to the Act.

However, Carers Australia does include the Act and its definition of carers within our Strategic Plan.

Additionally, as part of Carers Australia's Peak Body Funding agreement with the Australian Government Department of Social Services we are required to "Assist in giving effect to Australia's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability by engaging in campaigns to promote understanding and awareness of the challenges people with disability face and their rights, capabilities and contributions as well as the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*."

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