

Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers

Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs

Submission

Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania
Community Policy and Engagement | Community Partnerships and Priorities Division

The Tasmanian Government welcomes the inquiry of the effectiveness of the Commonwealth *Carer Recognition Act 2010* (the Commonwealth Act) to recognise and promote the significant contribution of unpaid and informal carers in Australia, including obligations for public service agencies.

This submission is in response to the third dot point of the Inquiries Terms of Reference. It provides an overview of the effectiveness of the Tasmanian approach to recognise the important contributions that over 80,000 unpaid Tasmanian carers make to our community, our state and our economy.

The Tasmanian Parliament passed the Carer Recognition Act in 2023. The process to develop the Tasmanian [Carer Recognition Act 2023](#) (the Tasmanian Act) included extensive community consultation to ensure the legislation responded to the identified needs and concerns of Tasmanian carers.

The Tasmanian Act differs from the Commonwealth Act in recognising unpaid kinship carers and people who care for a person who has alcohol or other drug dependence.

Another key element of the Tasmanian Act is the inclusion of a Carers Charter:

- 1. Carers should be acknowledged as diverse and are to be treated as individuals with their own needs within, and beyond, their roles as carers.*
- 2. Carers should be consulted in relation to the development and evaluation of policies and programs, and the provision of resources, in so far as those policies, programs and resources affect their role as carers.*
- 3. Carers should be empowered to access information and services that are relevant to them in their role as carers.*
- 4. Carers should be supported to participate in, and contribute to, the social, political, economic and cultural life of Tasmania, if they so desire.*
- 5. Carers should be recognised and respected for their valuable caring role and should be supported in accessing, and engaging in, a wide range of services to ensure their well-being and to maintain their connections to their community.*
- 6. Carers' knowledge about the persons for whom they are caring should be respected, acknowledging that each carer, and each person being cared for, has both rights and responsibilities.*
- 7. Carers should be able to raise concerns about decisions, and services, that affect them as carers or the persons for whom they are caring, without the carers or such persons suffering adverse repercussions, and those concerns should be dealt with as promptly as is reasonably practicable.*

The Tasmanian Act also outlines the obligations of Tasmanian Government agencies to monitor and report on the Charter and the Tasmanian Carer Action Plan.

To complement the passage of the Tasmanian Act the Tasmanian Government has elevated its previous Carer Issues Reference Group to a Ministerial Advisory Council. The Council will assist in the development and delivery of informed, effective and evidenced-based policy, programs and projects to support and recognise unpaid carers. Membership includes the CEOs of Carers Tasmania and Mental Health Families and Friends Tasmania, senior officials from relevant Tasmanian and Australian Government agencies, and five carers with lived experience.

We recommend that the Commonwealth legislative changes reflect the contemporary Tasmanian approach where we have included informal kinship carers, carers supporting someone with alcohol or other drug dependence, and the use of more contemporary and inclusive language. With state and territory legislation in place for Carers, it is important that Commonwealth legislation complements these initiatives.

We also recommend that a separate and accessible consultation process should occur to assist the development of the strategy, which will need its own governance method that includes carers.

Although the National Inquiry states that payment for carers is out of scope for this inquiry, the economic security of carers is a key priority which should be considered in an accompanying strategy to the legislation.

The Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet thanks you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry.