



Carers Queensland Inc.

**Submission to the
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs -
National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill 2012
Additional Information**

January 2013

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Family carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic medical condition, terminal illness or are frail aged.

The activity and impact of providing care is best understood in terms of its context; as a relationship between two or more individuals, rooted in family, friendship or community. Caring is a role rarely chosen by most, nor does it discriminate. Children and young people, people of working age and older people, people with a disability, people who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse, indigenous Australians and those living in rural and remote Queensland provide care to a family member or friends on a daily basis. For some caring is a short term commitment whilst for others, it is a role that literally lasts a lifetime.

Carers Queensland Inc. is the peak body representing the diverse concerns, needs and interests of carers in Queensland. Carers Queensland believes that all carers regardless of their age, disability, sexuality, religion, socioeconomic status, geographical location or their cultural and linguistic differences should have the same rights, choices and opportunities and be able to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family and community life, employment and education like other citizens of the State. Carers Queensland's mission is to improve the quality of life of all carers throughout Queensland.

We aspire to provide an independent platform from which to advance the issues and concerns of carers and believe our knowledge and expertise in carer issues means that we are able to provide the Commonwealth Government with relevant and trusted information that will ensure that the needs of carers will be recognised, respected and acted upon. Our ambition is to ensure that carers are recognised and included as active partners in the development of government social policy and service delivery practices.

INTRODUCTION

Carers Queensland welcomes the opportunity to provide meaningful input to this Senate enquiry. We believe we are in a unique position to consult with, and advocate on behalf of, the 494,200¹ carers living in Queensland, many of whom support and care for children and adults with disability.

This submission reflects the concerns of Queensland's carers, those citizens who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends with a disability or impairment. This submission has been informed by consultation with Queensland's carers, the annual C3 (carer) Consultations and Australian and international research.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

We provide the following information as requested during the Senate Hearing in Brisbane on 30th January:

1. Definition of the term 'carer'

The term carer is used in multiple contexts in contemporary Australian society. It is not uncommon to hear of paid staff or foster parents or families referred to as 'carers'.

Carers are people who provide support and assistance to another person because of disability, mental illness, chronic medical condition, terminal illness or frailty. For many people the term carer is both a noun and a verb. The word not only describes their relationship with the person they care for but indicates a commitment to the provision of emotional, physical, social, psychological and material/financial assistance beyond that of an 'ordinary' relationship. Carers provide unpaid care and support in a relationship that is not underpinned or defined by a contractual agreement.

Having regard for these points and to ensure clarity and consistency of interpretation, Carers Queensland recommends that the definition of a carer is amended to include a specific reference to the ***Carer Recognition Act 2010 and the accompanying Statement for Australia's Carers***.

2. Consistent use of the term 'carer'

Throughout the NDIS Bill carers are variously referred to as 'informal supports' or as a part of 'personal context' of the participant's life. Whilst carers are often referred to as providers of informal support, we prefer to be referred to as **carers**, as defined by the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*.

Carers Queensland recommends that the following changes are made to the Bill, thus ensuring consistency of wording and interpretation.

Chapter 2, 15(2): add 'and carers' and

Chapter 3, Part 2, Section 33: change 'informal supports' to 'care and support provided by carers'.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009). *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of findings*. Cat. No. 4430.0. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.