



# Queensland Carers Action Plan

2024–26



# Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and Elders of the lands and seas on which we meet, live, learn and work.

We acknowledge those of the past, the ancestors whose strength has nurtured this land and its people, and who have passed on their wisdom.

We acknowledge those of the present for their leadership and ongoing efforts to protect and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

We acknowledge those of the future, the Elders not yet born, who will inherit the legacy of our efforts.

We acknowledge the strong and rich cultural and community networks, spirituality and unique ways of caring for others that strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

We recognise it is our collective efforts, and responsibility as individuals, communities and governments, to ensure equality, recognition and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life.

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# Minister's message



As the Minister for Child Safety, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Multicultural Affairs,

I acknowledge the enormous contribution that carers make to Queensland communities, families and the people in their care.

Every day across the state, more than 642,200 carers, as well as many others who do not identify as carers, provide long-term, unpaid support for a child with additional needs, or someone with disability or a health condition, or a person who has become frail with age.

This essential support represents a substantial contribution to our economy and our society, ranging from help with practical tasks, through to nurturing and friendship.

I am pleased the *Queensland Carers Action Plan 2024–26* will continue to build on a range of existing initiatives designed to support carers as they carry out these critical roles and responsibilities.

These initiatives reflect the diversity of carers who come from all parts of the community and a wide range of cultural backgrounds and ages.

This can include parents caring for a child beyond the usual parenting role; a young person caring for parents, siblings or other

family members; adult sons and daughters caring for elderly parents; or grandparents being the primary caregivers for their grandchild.

While the responsibility of caring for another person can be very rewarding, it can also be challenging.

Carers make significant sacrifices in their own lives, which can affect their financial security, opportunities to socialise, and their health and wellbeing.

As our population ages, the need for informal care is expected to grow. It is important we act now to identify and deliver strategies to ensure we are working towards a Queensland where carers are valued, supported and free from discrimination.

I encourage employers, organisations and all levels of government to be aware of the needs of carers to ensure they have equal opportunities to participate fully in our community and are supported to sustain their caring roles.

The implementation of this Carers Action Plan is particularly timely, as multiple key reforms occur in the disability sector and a new National Carer Strategy is developed.

I thank the Queensland Carers Advisory Council for bringing a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise to the table during the development of this plan, and for advising on priority issues affecting carers and the people in their care.

Members with lived experience and representatives of organisations that support carers have provided invaluable insights on the policies, programs and quality services needed into the future.

In doing so, they have given Queensland carers a voice on reforms to ensure they are recognised and their capacity is strengthened.

I look forward to seeing the delivery of initiatives in this action plan and to continue providing the recognition and assistance that all Queensland carers deserve.



**Charis Mullen MP**

Minister for Child Safety

Minister for Seniors and Disability Services

Minister for Multicultural Affairs



# Queensland carers — who they are and why they are important

Carers make a significant contribution to the people they care for, and their effort and dedication benefits the economic and social wellbeing of the whole community.

There are more than 642,200 Queenslanders providing unpaid care or assistance to another person who needs help with everyday tasks. Carers may be, for example:

- an adult caring for another person because of frailty, disability, mental illness, chronic or terminal illness
- a parent caring for a child beyond the usual parent role
- a young person (up to 25 years of age) caring for, or involved in the care of, a parent, grandparent, sibling or other relative
- a grandparent who is the primary caregiver for their grandchild because their parents are unable to take care of them.

The average age of carers is 49.7 years, but many are much younger. Teenagers, and even young children can be informal carers. More than half of all carers are women (55.3 per cent).

The responsibility of caring for another person can be rewarding, but the responsibility can impact the ability of a carer in many areas of their life. Socialising, financial security as well as other opportunities that were once part of everyday life can be diminished because of the challenges involved in caring. Studies show that carers may experience lower wellbeing, higher psychological distress and poorer physical health.

For the one-in-nine Queenslanders who identify as carers, there are significant opportunity costs associated with the decision to provide informal care.

Many carers do not recognise themselves as carers. Many see it as their role and responsibility to care as part of being a family and community. Carers' needs are different to the needs of the people for whom they care.

The Queensland Carers Advisory Council provides advice to the Minister in relation to policy, programs and services for carers. It has advised that carers face a significant opportunity cost in their lifetimes, through reduced earnings and lower retirement incomes.

A study undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics estimated that the economic value of care provided by informal carers in Australia was \$77.9 billion in 2020. The lost earnings of informal carers that had to partially or fully withdraw from the workforce to provide care was estimated at \$15.2 billion.

Deloitte found that as the population continues to age, the need for informal care is expected to increase. However, the corresponding supply of carers is not expected to keep up with demand, resulting in a significant gap by 2030.

It is important that all carers receive greater recognition and effective support for their caring role and are aware of the available resources and supports.

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring that carers are valued and supported, and free from discrimination.

# Carers snapshot

There are more than

**642,200**  
Queenslanders  
providing long-  
term unpaid care

for someone with a  
disability, a long-term  
health condition or who  
is frail and ageing.

(ABS Survey of Disability,  
Ageing and Carers, 2022)

**15.3%** of  
Queenslanders  
provide care  
for another person  
(or persons).

Nearly  
**1 in 4**  
carers are aged  
**65 years and  
older** (23.4%).

**1 in 20**  
young people  
aged under 25  
**are carers.**

In 2020, if  
unpaid care was  
replaced by paid  
care, informal  
care would be  
valued at  
**\$77.9 billion**  
in Australia.

(Deloitte Access  
Economics, 2020)

**\$57,300**  
per year

For every year someone  
is a primary carer,  
on average they  
will lose \$17,700 in  
superannuation and  
\$39,600 in lifetime  
earnings.

(Carers Queensland, 2022)

**14,039**  
Grandparent  
families\*

in Queensland.  
(2021 Census)

\*Grandparent families are  
recognised where there is  
grandparent-grandchild  
relationship in a family and  
no parent-child relationship.

## Young carers:

- 1 in 10 carers in Queensland or 10.3% of the state population are young carers
  - 70% of young carers are likely to be female
  - over half are caring for a parent
  - evidence shows caring has a significant impact on educational and health outcomes (Hutchings et al. (2021)).
- (ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2018)

By age 67, primary  
carers will lose  
**\$175,000** in  
superannuation  
and \$392,500 in  
lifetime earnings.

Primary carers  
spend on average  
**35.2 hours**  
each week  
providing care.

(Deloitte Access  
Economics, 2020)

# Queensland Carers Advisory Council

The Queensland Government recognises the value of having people with lived experience provide expert advice on how policy, programs and services can better meet the needs of carers.

The Queensland Carers Advisory Council (QCAC) was established in 2009 under the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008* (the Act) to ensure the perspectives of carers on a wide range of issues are represented, informing the work of government, as well as recognising the valuable contribution of carers to the people they care for.

Each Council term is two years and consists of 12 members who:

- are carers (4 members including 1 grandparent carer)
- represent organisations that work with carers (4)
- represent government departments that have an interest in carers (4).

The current Council term commenced on 1 February 2024 and ends on 31 January 2026.

## Links to other government initiatives

This action plan recognises the significant work and reforms relating to carers and the people they care for being undertaken by the Queensland and Australian Governments.

### Queensland Government

The *Communities 2032* strategy is Queensland's first long-term, holistic strategy for our communities. It will guide Queensland Government action over 10 years, towards a vision that Queensland's communities support and empower every person to connect, participate, contribute and thrive.

The *Human Rights Act 2019* protects and promotes human rights. All carers should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians, regardless of age, race, sex, disability, sexuality, religious or political beliefs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritages, cultural or linguistic differences, socioeconomic status or location.

Queensland's Disability Plan 2022–27 is our plan to build the inclusion of Queenslanders with disability and is integral to the experience of carers.

*Future Directions for an Age-Friendly Queensland* is the Queensland Government's commitment to continuing to create age-friendly communities in which older people feel connected, cared for and can contribute in ways of their choosing.





The findings of the Inquiry into Social Isolation and Loneliness in Queensland in 2021 have resulted in new approaches and initiatives to tackle social isolation and loneliness. These include providing additional funding support to neighbourhood and community centres to respond to a wide range of community needs, including supporting carers and funding initiatives across Queensland that aim to reduce social isolation and loneliness.

The Queensland Government is working with the Australian Government and other states and territories on a significant reform agenda to respond to the final reports of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission) and the Independent Review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS Review).

### **Australian Government**

The report of the Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers, tabled in the Australian Parliament on 27 March 2024, examined the effectiveness of the Commonwealth *Carer Recognition Act 2010* in recognising and raising awareness of the role of carers, developments in the policy landscape since the Act was established and considered options for reform.

The National Carer Strategy is being developed to provide a coherent national agenda. It is expected to be delivered by the end of 2024 and is being developed in consultation with carers across Australia to ensure it reflects the diversity of carers and the challenges they face.

The Carer Inclusive Workplace Initiative ensures carers are better supported to participate in the workforce and help workplaces to support and retain employees who also fulfill caring roles.

The Carer Gateway service helps to connect carers with a range of targeted supports, including needs assessment and planning, tailored support packages, in-person and phone-based coaching, counselling and peer support, along with emergency respite. In Queensland, the Carer Gateway service is delivered by Wellways Australia.

## Engaging carers

The Queensland Government has been listening to carers to identify gaps in services and supports through a number of mechanisms including:

- » advice from QCAC that includes representation from carers with lived experience, Carers Queensland and Arafmi as the carers advisory peak bodies and other carer organisations
- » facilitated focus groups and conversations with carers known as ‘Kitchen table conversations’
- » findings of Carers Queensland’s and Arafmi’s statewide consultation with carers
- » insights from recent surveys and research findings.



## Key insights include:

- » carers need to be involved in determining their own journey
- » carers have unique insights and knowledge of the person/s they care for which should be acknowledged by the community
- » many carers are unaware of existing services that can assist them in their caring role
- » carers, including young carers, need to be involved in policy formulation and review by Government and non-government organisations, to ensure that services continue to align with their needs
- » services for carers need to be better integrated to ensure ease of accessibility
- » affordable housing is a significant challenge for carers
- » young carers experience a range of difficulties, with evidence showing a significant impact on educational and health outcomes
- » there is a need to improve identification of young carers, to increase and improve access to support services
- » there is a need to increase awareness of young carer issues within the community
- » grandparent carers need assistance to access appropriate supports
- » carers face an opportunity cost over their lifetime, through reduced earnings and lower retirement incomes
- » culturally and linguistically diverse carers need to be better targeted to assist identification as a carer, and to navigate and access services
- » carers face social isolation and stigma that can contribute to mental illness and physical health problems
- » social and economic returns to government of investing in carers, through increased support and services, will result in future savings to the economy
- » there is a need for all workplaces to recognise carers and support them through flexible work arrangements, recognising the principles of the Queensland Carers Charter
- » there is a need to raise awareness of the economic and social value of carers
- » parts of the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008* and the Queensland Carers Charter require review.

# Queensland Carers Advisory Council priorities

QCAC has identified four priority areas for action:

1. Advise on and advocate for systemic change for carers
2. Advise on and advocate for recognition for carers
3. Advise on and advocate for services for carers
4. Maximise the impact and effectiveness of the Queensland Carers Advisory Council

## Priority area 1: Advise on and advocate for systemic change for carers

### Rationale

During the life of this plan, there will be significant opportunities to influence systemic change for carers at both a state and national level. QCAC plays a key role, not only in advocating for carers to be considered in policy and operational reforms, but in providing strategic advice to inform the development of meaningful, inclusive legislation and policies that will deliver improved outcomes for carers in Queensland.

The actions in this priority area reflect QCAC's commitment to improving the lives of carers through advising on and advocating for systemic change.

### Actions

#### 1.1 Provide strategic advice to inform consideration of a review of the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008 (Qld)*.

QCAC has recommended the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008 (Qld)* (the Act) be reviewed to adopt a rights-based approach, incorporate transparent monitoring and accountability mechanisms and modernise the language and conceptual understanding of carers. It would also include an expanded definition of carers and definition of a care relationship. The Queensland Government has committed to reviewing the Act in 2025–26.

QCAC will draw on members' lived experience as carers and the expertise of government and non-government members and their networks, relevant peak bodies and other stakeholders to inform the Queensland Government's consideration of the review of the Act.

#### 1.2 Provide advice on the development and implementation of the National Carer Strategy.

In October 2023, the Australian Government committed to the development of a National Carer Strategy.

QCAC will actively seek opportunities to engage directly with the Australian Government through the development and implementation of the National Carer Strategy to ensure it considers and reflects the contemporary needs of carers and is suitable for a Queensland policy context.

### **1.3 Advise on the review of the *Carer Recognition Act 2010 (Cwlth)*.**

On 27 March 2024, the *Report of the Inquiry into the Recognition of Unpaid Carers* (the Report) was tabled in the Australian Parliament.

The report recommended amendments to the *Carer Recognition Act 2010 (Cwlth)* and further work to determine how to establish rights for carers including acknowledgment as partners in care, involvement in planning and policy development, access to information regarding the person they care for to enable the provision of care, and access to flexible work arrangements.

QCAC will engage with the Australian Government and Queensland Government to contribute to the review of the *Carer Recognition Act 2010 (Cwlth)* and other reforms recommended by the Report.

### **1.4 Provide advice to ensure the role and needs of carers are reflected in key disability reforms at a state and national level.**

The Queensland Government is working with the Commonwealth Government and other states and territories to further the disability reform agenda following the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review.

QCAC will collaborate with carers, cohort-specific peak bodies and other stakeholders as required throughout the Council term to formulate and provide comprehensive advice that ensures the voice of Queensland carers is heard and considered in the design and implementation of responses to the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review.

QCAC will also support advocacy efforts of the Minister for Child Safety, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Multicultural Affairs as needed on behalf of Queensland carers to inform disability reforms to contribute to systemic change for carers.

## **Highlights**

In 2024–25, the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services (DCSSDS) is providing \$329,372 to Carers Queensland as part of the Queensland Disability Peak and Representative Body Program. This program funds organisations to deliver peak body services to Queenslanders with disability, their family members and carers, as well as disability service providers. Supported by this funding, Carers Queensland works closely with QCAC to identify priority issues for carers of people with disability and ensure their voices are reflected in advice on and advocacy for systemic change and disability reform. DCSSDS is committed to ensuring carers of people with disability are supported through its peak body program.

## Priority area 2: Advise on and advocate for recognition for carers

### Rationale

Carers come from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds and make a significant contribution to the people they care for and in their community. The people they care for are as diverse as carers themselves: they can be persons with disability, grandchildren, people experiencing mental illness, other chronic or terminal illness or age-related frailty. Many see caring as a family or community responsibility and do not recognise themselves as carers.

The Queensland Carers Charter establishes that carers should be recognised for their unique knowledge and experience and as individuals with their own needs. It is important that all carers are aware of the resources and supports available to them and receive greater recognition and effective support for their role.

The actions in this priority area reflect QCAC's focus on providing advice on and advocating for greater recognition for carers.

### Actions

#### 2.1 Identify gaps in recognition of carers, especially minority carer cohorts.

Carers from minority cohorts, including First Nations peoples, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, grandparent and young carers, working carers and LGBTQIA+ carers often do not self-identify as carers. Without awareness and understanding of what carers do and the impact on their own lives, community members may also not recognise the role and contribution of carers.

QCAC will engage with key stakeholders, including carer and cohort-specific peak bodies and workplace and business organisations, to identify gaps in both self and public recognition of carers, particularly those from minority cohorts.

#### 2.2 Identify and provide advice on approaches to increasing recognition for minority carer groups.

While the responsibility of caring for another person can be rewarding, it can impact the carer in other areas of their life. Greater recognition of the role and needs of the carer can lead to significantly improved outcomes for them.

QCAC will continue to provide advice on approaches to recognise the diverse range of carer cohorts, including advice on priority carer groups to target for recognition and support.

QCAC will also provide advice on workforce strategies for Queensland Government agencies and statutory authorities that recognise and support those employees with caring roles.

### 2.3 Continue to raise public awareness of the role of carers and highlight the value of their contribution through their carer networks and the community.

Initiatives such as National Carers Week and the Carer Business Discount Card provide opportunities to raise awareness of the important role of carers and their contribution in the community. Campaigns,

including Care is Everywhere, also raise awareness, recognise the diversity of carers, and encourage people in caring roles to self-identify as carers and seek supports if required.

QCAC will continue to support and work to improve these types of activities and initiatives by providing input to, and assisting with, promotion of events and activities via peak bodies, community organisations and member networks.

#### Highlights

The Care is Everywhere campaign was launched in June 2024 and aims to raise awareness of the role of carers and encourage people to self-identify as carers. The campaign provides information on services and supports that are available for carers.



## Priority area 3: Advise on and advocate for services for carers

### Rationale

The *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008 (Qld)* and the Queensland Carers Charter recognise that the interests of carers need to be considered in decisions about the services they access.

Carers often report experiencing social isolation as well as physical and mental stress. They can also experience specific challenges such as workforce participation and financial disadvantage.

There is a need to ensure that carers can easily navigate supports and service systems such as the NDIS, My Aged Care, Centrelink, and mainstream services; and that these systems are inclusive of carers, working with them to best support them and those being cared for.

One of QCAC's key roles is to make recommendations to the Minister on enhancing compliance by public authorities with the Charter.

The actions in this priority area reflect QCAC's commitment to continuing to work with governments, advocating for and providing advice about the needs of carers and gaps in service delivery that impact on carers.

### Actions

#### 3.1 Identify and provide advice on gaps in carer support services.

The Queensland and Australian Governments deliver a range of services that directly impact carers and the people they care for. Other services may directly or indirectly assist carers with cost-of-living support, health and wellbeing, and preventing and overcoming social isolation and loneliness.

QCAC will engage with key stakeholders, including carer and peak bodies, to identify and develop consolidated advice on service gaps for Queensland carers, including those from minority carer cohorts.

#### 3.2 Identify and advise on ways to address service gaps for carers.

Addressing identified service gaps is key to achieving improved outcomes for carers, caring for them and supporting them to also care for themselves.

QCAC will continue to provide advice to the Queensland Government about embedding and promoting the principles of the Queensland Carers Charter in services affecting carers.

#### 3.3 Support the Minister to advocate for carer services and supports funded by the Queensland and Australian Governments.

The Australian Government provides a range of services and supports for carers, including income support and funding for services and programs such as the Carer Gateway and Carer Inclusive Workplaces.

QCAC will support the Minister to advocate for federally funded carer services and supports by providing comprehensive advice on priority issues for Queensland carers and approaches to address those issues.





## Highlights

- Successive Queensland Budgets have provided billions of dollars in cost-of-living relief through concessions and rebates to Queenslanders, including carers.
- The Queensland Government invests more than \$1 million each year in the Time for Grandparents program run by Uniting Care Community. The program provides grandparents who are the primary carers for their grandchildren with respite through access to free day activities and camps.
- The Queensland Government is also delivering the four-year, \$4 million Communities Innovation Fund, a flagship initiative of *Communities 2032*, which commenced in 2023 and aims to create meaningful connections for Queenslanders experiencing social isolation and loneliness.
- A Queensland Government investment of \$6.8 million annually to support specialist seniors social isolation services across the state. Older carers can join a wide range of activities in their local communities to help build connections and prevent social isolation and loneliness.
- The Queensland Government's Carer Business Discount Card provides benefits to around 17,000 carers across Queensland. It helps to ease cost-of-living pressures by providing a range of discounts on goods and services for carers at over 4,000 participating business outlets across the state.

## Priority area 4: Maximise the impact and effectiveness of the Queensland Carers Advisory Council

### Rationale

Carers need a voice at all tables to inform and advise on the issues that affect them.

QCAC's purpose is to provide ongoing advice on work to promote the interests of carers and make recommendations to support carer recognition throughout each Council term.

The actions in this priority area demonstrate QCAC's ongoing commitment to seize opportunities to increase its impact and effectiveness through comprehensive strategic advice and advocacy.

### Actions

#### 4.1 Ensure effective sourcing, understanding and representation of the carer voice.

Ensuring that carers are appropriately and effectively understood and represented is critical in advancing their interests.

QCAC will continue to ensure that the views of a diverse range of carers are sought through suitable mechanisms and reflected in its work.

It will also continue to source relevant providers to undertake priority research and other activities to inform comprehensive advice to the Minister.

#### 4.2 Develop increased advisory impact to Queensland Government agencies, including Queensland Health, the Department of Education and the Department of Justice and the Attorney-General.

Queensland Government agencies play a critical role in supporting and promoting the rights of carers, and ensuring they receive the services they need. Opportunity exists for increased advisory impact to these agencies, particularly Queensland Health and the Department of Education.

QCAC membership includes representation from four Queensland Government agencies: the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services; Queensland Health; the Department of Education; and the Office of the Public Guardian (Department of Justice and the Attorney-General).

QCAC will leverage the membership of Queensland Government agencies to provide strategic advice across a range of government systems that informs services and supports for carers and the people they care for.

#### 4.3 Develop increased collaboration and support with other key advisory bodies.

Collaboration with other key advisory bodies to Queensland Government offers the best opportunity to ensure the voice of carers is heard in decision making that affects carers.

Specifically, QCAC will focus on building collaboration with the Queensland Disability Advisory Council to strengthen the voice for carers in policy and program decision making.

#### 4.4 Achieve greater clarity and leverage the role of carer and cohort-specific peak bodies.

Working effectively with peak bodies for carers and specific carer cohorts provides access to a broad range of lived experience and expertise to ensure QCAC

provides advice that is representative of the diverse range of Queensland carers.

QCAC will collaborate with the carer and cohort-specific peak bodies under the Queensland Disability Peak and Representative Bodies Program; and leverage the role and expertise of these bodies to support carers.

#### Highlights

- Over the two years of the action plan the Queensland Government will provide \$300,000 to support QCAC activities and initiatives that advance the interests of carers.
- In 2024, QCAC will strengthen its capacity to provide robust, strategic, evidence-based advice for government decision makers through participating in a series of discussions and workshops delivered by the Australia and New Zealand School of Government and funded by the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services.

## References

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Hutchings K, Radford K, Harris N, McMillan S, Slattery M, Spencer N, Wheeler A (2021)

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## Translating and interpreting assistance



The Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services is committed to providing accessible information and services to Queenslanders from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds. To talk to someone about the *Queensland Carers Action Plan 2024–26* in your preferred language call 1800 512 451.

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