

Queensland Carers Advisory Council Communique – April 2024

The Queensland Carers Advisory Council (the Council) met on 24 April 2024 for the first meeting of its 2024-26 term.

Carers attending the meeting were Slawka Bell, Natalie Bird, Melissa Williams and Dr Nancy Spencer, with organisational representative Irene Clelland (Arafmi) also attending. Robynne Cooper (Anglicare, Central Queensland) was unable to attend the meeting. Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, Queensland Health, Department of Education and Office of the Public Guardian were also represented.

Fritha Radyk, (Carers Queensland), is the Chairperson with Irene Clelland confirmed as Deputy Chairperson.

The Honourable Charis Mullen, Minister for Child Safety, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Multicultural Affairs attended the meeting. The Minister acknowledged the role and strength of carers, and the value carers contribute to the community.

The Minister and Council members discussed key issues for carers including:

- The need to clarify and refocus the definition of ‘carer’ in the *Queensland Carer (Recognition) Act 2008* and harmonise this with Commonwealth legislation
- The advocacy role of carers on behalf of those they care for in various systems, including as parents of students with disability in the school system, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and others
- Support for carers to address the impacts of caring, including superannuation and income replacement, availability of respite, wellbeing issues, navigation of and intersections with government and statutory systems, employment and cost of living impacts and picking up the needs of young carers, and
- The role of the Council in bringing about systemic change for carers.

The Council welcomed the Ministers’ commitment to consider reviewing the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008* in 2025-26, informed by advice from the Council in its 2022-24 term.

The Council received briefings on the Queensland Government response to the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission, and the Final Report of the Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers that was tabled in the Australian Parliament on 27 March 2024. The Chair also provided an update on development of the National Carer Strategy.

Further discussion of this significant reform agenda focussed on identifying opportunities for the Council to advocate and inform reforms as they relate to unpaid carers. This contribution will form a significant focus of work for the Council over the 2024-26 term, as well as other priority issues which were discussed to be finalised to commence in 2024-25.

The Council received a funding allocation of \$150,000 in 2023-24 which will deliver a Carer Business Discount Card Research Project and expansion of the ‘Care is Everywhere’ campaign website hosted by Carers Queensland. Both projects are on track for delivery within approved budgets and timeframes.

A further allocation of \$150,000 will be available to progress projects that advance the interests of Queensland carers in 2024-25.