

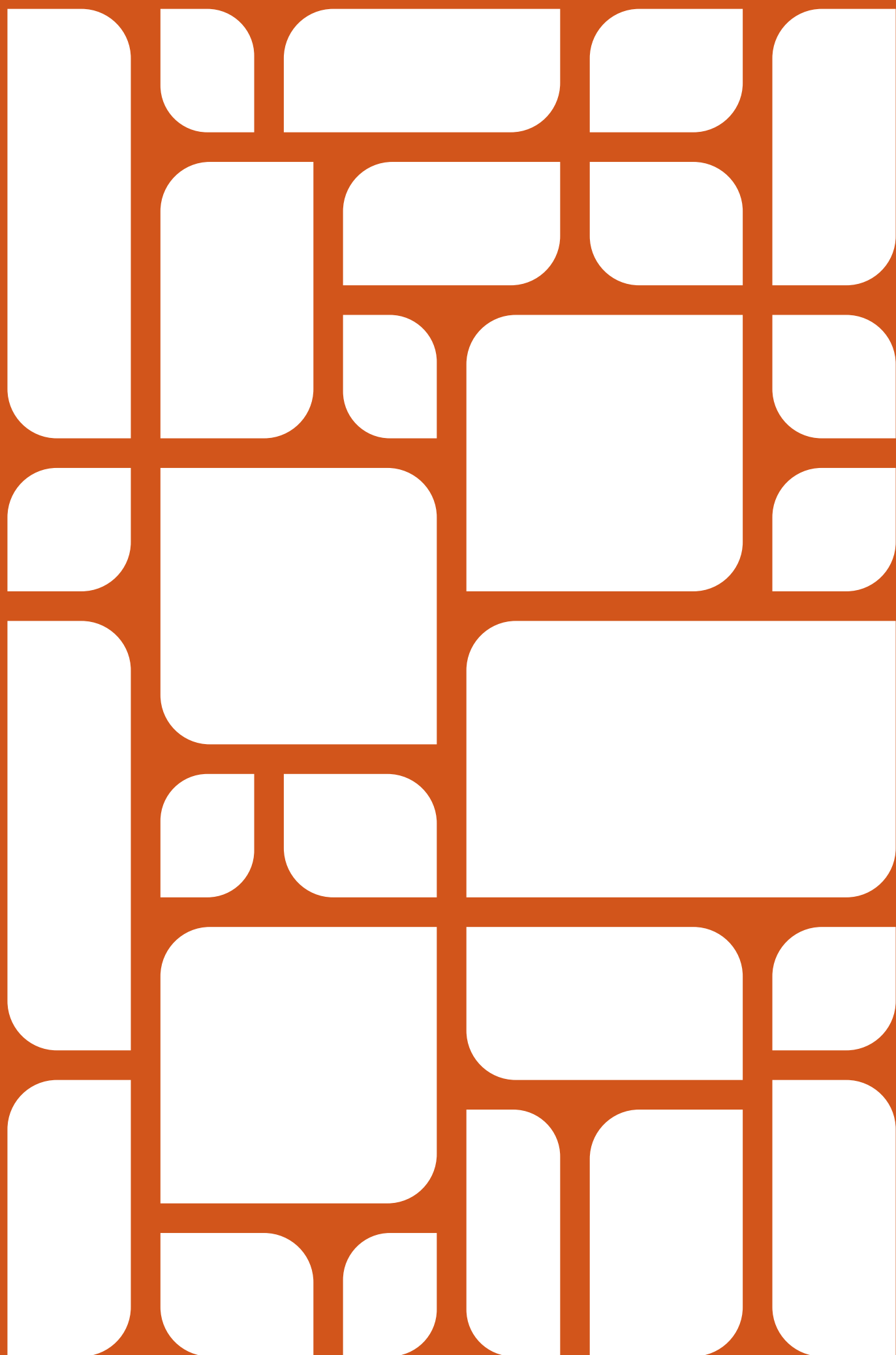


Supporting Tasmanian Carers

Tasmanian Carer

Action Plan 2021-25

Refreshed August 2024

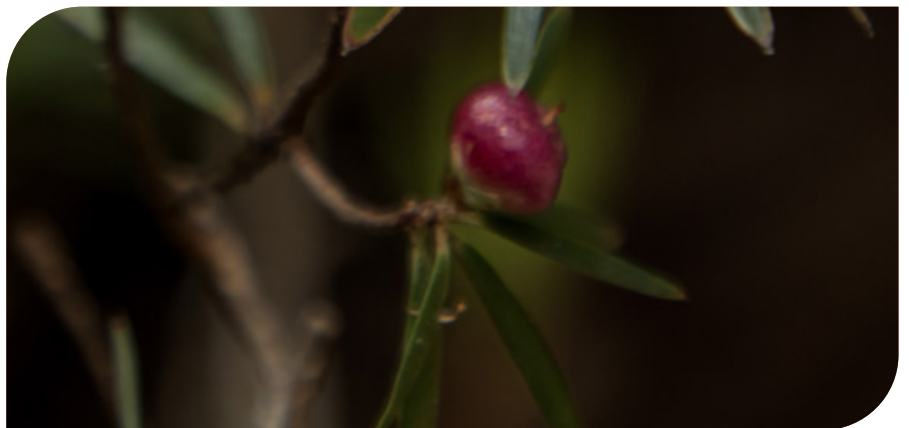


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Acknowledgement

In recognition of the deep history and culture of this Island, we would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to all Tasmanian Aboriginal people; the past and present Custodians of the Land.



Acronyms

DECYP – Department for Education, Children and Young People

DoH – Department of Health

DPAC – Department of Premier and Cabinet

DSG – Department of State Growth

MCAC – Minister’s Carer Advisory Council

MHFFT – Mental Health Families and Friends Tasmania

PESRAC – Premier’s Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council

PHT – Primary Health Tasmania

SSMO – State Service Management Office

THS – Tasmanian Health Service

TSS – Tasmanian State Service

HACC – Tasmanian Home and Community Care

NDIS – National Disability Insurance Scheme



Minister's Foreword



Carers deserve respect and recognition for the significant contribution they make to the people they care for as well as the whole community. Many of us are not aware of the enormous contribution carers make, or fully appreciate the challenges they face every day.

At the 2021 State Election the Tasmanian Government committed to introducing Tasmania's first Carer Recognition legislation.

The Carer Recognition Act 2023 (the Act) came before Parliament in June 2022. It unanimously passed through the House of Assembly in November 2022 and the Legislative Council in March 2023.

Key elements of the Act include enacting a Carers Charter and setting out the obligations of Tasmanian Government agencies to monitor and report on the Charter and the Tasmanian Carer Action Plan.

The Tasmanian Government also proactively committed to completing a refresh of the 2021-24 Action Plan to ensure alignment with the newly enacted legislation. It is intended that this refreshed *Supporting Tasmanian Carers: Tasmanian Carer Action Plan 2021-25* will guide government agencies, service providers and the community towards greater support for and recognition of carers and their needs.

The Australian Government is developing a National Carer Strategy to deliver a national agenda to support Australia's carers. This refreshed Action Plan has been extended until 2025 to ensure the development of the next Tasmanian Carer Action Plan considers and aligns with the National Carer Strategy.

The voice of carers has informed the Act. We listened to what we heard at the consultations and amended the language in the definition to be inclusive and contemporary and to recognise informal unpaid kinship carers. Tasmania is now the first state to recognise, through legislation, carers supporting a person with alcohol or other drug dependence.

We are continuing to listen to the voice of carers as we implement the Carers Charter and in the development of this refreshed Action Plan. The Tasmanian Government has elevated its previous Carer Issues Reference Group to a Ministerial Advisory Council. Membership includes five carers with varied lived and living experience of caring.

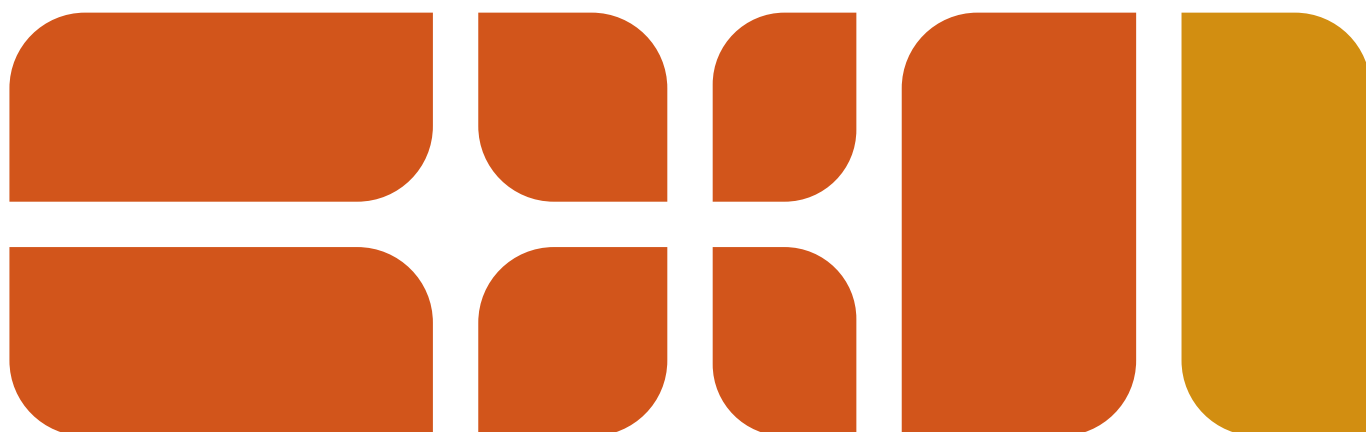
Many of us will become carers at some point in our lives, or we may need care ourselves. It is a role that can develop gradually or may be required unexpectedly at any time, and one for which many people are rarely given a choice.

While there has been good progress in recognition of the vital role of carers in Tasmania, the Tasmanian Government is committed to continue to work closely with Carers Tasmania, Mental Health Families and Friends Tasmania, and other key organisations to ensure carers have access to the services and support they need and also have opportunities to maximise participation in all areas of life.

I thank advocates, organisations and of course Tasmanian carers for their contribution to this refreshed Action Plan, which will help shape the future direction for carers in Tasmania.

Hon Roger Jaensch MP

Minister for Community Services





Introduction

The Tasmanian Government acknowledges the vital role and contribution of unpaid carers to the health, wellbeing and security of their family members and friends who are in need of support and assistance.

A person can become a carer at any point in their life journey – as a child, a young person, an adult or as a retiree. Often carers may have dual caring roles. For example, a person may care for a family member with a disability and also for an older parent.

Carers provide unpaid care or support for family members or friends who need help with everyday tasks because of disability, mental ill-health, alcohol or other drug dependence, dementia, or health conditions - from chronic illness, frailty in ageing, to palliative care. The Act also acknowledges Tasmanian informal kinship carers who play a crucial role in providing care and support to children who cannot live with their biological parents for various reasons. These carers provide a stable and nurturing environment for these children.

The unique journey of carers means that many do not see themselves as 'carers' and may not always want to reveal their caring role to others. They see their caring role as a personal responsibility they have within their extended family and community.



What Carers have told us:

“The health services are great at what they do, but they do not seem to have the carer in mind. It is always about the recipient and of course, it should be, but carers are a vital part of the person’s life. They need to be considered more.”

“I hid my caring role and didn’t talk to others or friends about it.”

“Like a lot of young carers, I didn’t want to bring friends home.”

“I had missed too much school. I wanted to be a nurse.”

“I had to be extra good at school, help at home, and make sure there were no extra hassles for mum.”

“I didn’t think I was a carer. It wasn’t until my guidance counsellor in high school said I was a carer that I realised.”

This Action Plan seeks to complement existing services, with a focus on supporting access, encouraging participation, and enhancing recognition of carers in our community.

While the current Action Plan runs until 2024, the Tasmanian Government proactively committed to completing a refresh to ensure alignment with the *Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act 2023* (the Act).

This refreshed Action Plan follows on from, and consolidates, the outcomes achieved through the Tasmanian Carer Action Plan 2017-20 and the Tasmanian Carer Policy 2016 (Appendix 1). It will be in effect until 2025.

The Tasmanian Government acknowledges that there are many other people who perform caring roles in the community, which is why we have used the terms ‘informal’ and ‘unpaid’ when describing carers. However, for the purposes of this Action Plan, the term ‘carer’ applies to you if you care for a family member or friend in an unpaidⁱ informal role.

The Australian Government is the primary provider of funding and services for carers. These services are accessible through the Carer Gateway which is delivered in Tasmania by Carers Tasmania through Care2Serve.ⁱⁱ

The refreshed Action Plan seeks to complement and not duplicate services. The focus is to support carers to access services and participate in the Tasmanian community, to enhance the recognition of carers in Government workplaces and service delivery, and ensure carer’s voices are considered in the development of Tasmanian Government policy and programs.

Progress reports against this refreshed and previous Action Plans are published on the DPAC website.



1. Who is a Carer?

Many people are carers. The focus of the refreshed Supporting Tasmanian Carers is the more than 80,000 Tasmanians who provide support to a family member or friend as unpaid and informal carers.

The *Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act 2023* uses the following definition of a carer:

A carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who has disability, mental ill health, chronic or life-limiting condition, alcohol or other drug dependence, is frail or aged, or is a child, if the person is an informal kinship carer of the child.

An informal kinship carer is an adult providing care to a person under the age of 18 because their parent is not able to, and there is no formal agreement or court order in place. An informal kinship carer is either:

- a relative (other than parents); or
- considered to be a family member or a close friend; or
- a member of the child or young person's community (in accordance with their culture).

In this situation, the child's parents still have legal parental responsibility. They are in charge of all major and long-term decisions about the child and only they can do things like legally authorise medical care, apply for passports, and sign school forms.

Children and young people under the age of 25 who provide care to another person are called young carers. Young carers can be at risk of not being recognised and supported in their caring role. Despite the important role they play, young carers sometimes experience an increased risk of stigma, social isolation, and negative impacts on educational and employment outcomes. It is important that young carers are connected to the support available to help them.

People who are employed to provide care for another person are support workers/support staff as opposed to 'carers'. While other community members also have important caring roles – such as formal kinship carers or paid support workers they perform these roles under different and formalised structures and are not captured within this Action Plan or the Act.

Why have we changed the definition?

Although not all people necessarily recognise themselves as a carer, the Act, associated Charter, and the refreshed Tasmanian Carer Action Plan, aim to increase the recognition of carers and connect them to the supports available.

When consulting for the Act, carers indicated the language needed an update. The definition was updated with contemporary, inclusive, and person-centred language. As an example, the term mental ill health is used to better support those caring for someone without a formal diagnosis of mental illness, or a condition that is episodic. The language around alcohol or other drug dependence is also the preferred wording (Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies, 2023)ⁱⁱⁱ. The language was also changed slightly to support the People with Disability Australia Language Guide.





2. Governance

Minister's Carer Advisory Council

To complement the passage of the Act, the Tasmanian Government elevated its previous Carer Issues Reference Group (CIRG) to a Minister's Carer Advisory Council (MCAC) in 2023. This ensures that the voice of carers and their experience will guide the implementation and monitoring of the Carer Charter across government.

MCAC is chaired by the Minister for Community Services and is a key reference point for the Tasmanian Government on issues affecting unpaid carers. The role of MCAC is to provide advice, information and insights about issues affecting carers to assist in the development and delivery of informed, effective and evidenced-based policy, programs and projects to support and recognise unpaid carers.

Representatives include five people with lived or living caring experience. This is a critical change to ensure that carers have a direct opportunity with respect to the governance of the group as previously, carers were not part of the CIRG. This aligns with item two in the Carers Charter:

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.

Other members include senior representatives from:

- Carers Tasmania;
- Mental Health Family and Friends Tasmania;
- Department of Premier and Cabinet;
- Department for Education, Children and Young People;
- Department of Health;
- Australian Government Department of Social Services;
- Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care; and
- National Disability Insurance Agency.

Secretariat support to MCAC is provided by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

MCAC has supported the refresh of Supporting Tasmanian Carers, and we particularly thank the carers for their valuable input.

Implementation of the Act

One of the important components of the Act is the requirement for Tasmanian Government agencies to take reasonable steps to implement the Tasmanian Carer Action Plan and the Carers Charter.

Each Agency is to monitor and report to the Minister on the steps taken by the Agency to implement the Tasmanian Carer Action Plan and the Carers Charter. DPAC's Community Partnerships and Priorities Division will oversee the annual monitoring and reporting of agencies implementation of the plan and charter.

Tasmanian Government funded carer organisations

Carers Tasmania/Care to Serve

Carers Tasmania was established in 1993. It operates as a peak body, working with government, health and community sectors to enhance service provision and improve the conditions for family and friend carers through policy development, research and advocacy. Carers Tasmania is part of a national network of carer organisations in each state and territory that are also peaks, as part of Carers Australia.

Care2Serve was established by Carers Tasmania as a wholly owned charitable entity through which services would be delivered. In so doing, Carers Tasmania has separated advocacy and services to ensure best practice governance. Care2Serve plays a significant role in providing carer supports in Tasmania as the sole Carer Gateway service provider. Care2Serve has offices in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie.

Mental Health Families and Friends Tasmania

Mental Health Families and Friends Tasmania (MHFFT) is a peak body funded by DoH to represent families and friends of people living with mental ill health, suicidality and/or alcohol or other drugs (AOD) use. The body provides systemic advocacy from a family and carer perspective, drawing on lived experience to improve mental health services.

MHFFT see family members, friends and unpaid carers as playing a unique role in the recovery journey of people living with mental ill health because they know the person, and most likely knew them before they became unwell. They hold a unique source of information about the person's life beyond their mental ill health, including information about their interests, skills, beliefs and ambitions.

Support for Informal Kinship Carers

In Tasmania, there are several organisations and associations that support informal kinship carers. Currently, Baptcare and Mission Australia are funded by DPAC to provide the Community Kinship Program. This program supports grandparents and other relatives who are informal kinship carers.

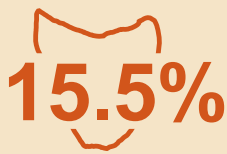


3. What the data tells us about Carers

The Tasmanian Caring experience

In 2018, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that there were 80,100 carers in Tasmania.^{iv} This represents 15.5 per cent of the Tasmanian population and is the highest per capita rate of carers in all the states and territories. This does not account for the number of informal kinship carers which is unknown currently in Tasmania. It has been estimated that there may be four times as many children in informal care arrangements than in foster Care in Australia (Dr Meredith Kiraly, 2018). However, informal kinship care is often hidden, and we hope to change this so that more informal kinship carers can access support.

Carers – Tasmanian Statistics



15.5%

80,100 carers, representing 15.5 per cent of all Tasmanians.



The average age of Tasmanian carers is 52.5 (51.9 female and 53.4 male).

11.6%
under 25

9,300 (11.6 per cent) of Tasmanian carers are under the age of 25.



14.8% 15.8%

Females were more likely to be carers (15.8 per cent of all females) than males (14.8 per cent of all males).

28%
65 or older

carers are 65 years or older.



21 per cent of Tasmanian carers are of prime working age (25 to 44 years old).



43.7 per cent of carers reported having a disability, compared with 22.9 per cent of the non-carer Tasmanian population.



Only **46 per cent** of Tasmanian carers are employed (either part-time or full-time) compared to 61.4 per cent of non-carers.



On average, Tasmanian carers earn approximately **\$190 less per week** than their non-carer counterparts (carers median gross income per week \$520, non-carers \$710).



Tasmanian carers have a **lower labour force participation rate** (49.4 per cent) than people who are not carers (64.6 per cent).



Nearly half (47.9 per cent) of all carers live in a households that fall into the lowest two tiers of average gross income, almost twice that of non-carers (26.4 per cent).

It should also be noted that the ABS used a slightly different definition of ‘carer’ in its survey:

A carer is defined as a person who provides any informal assistance, in terms of help or supervision, to people with disability or older people (aged 65 years and over). Assistance must be ongoing, or likely to be ongoing, for at least six months.^v

While using a definition of ‘young carer’ under 25 years of age, Carers Tasmania estimates that the number of young carers of school age could be as high as one in every 15 students in Tasmania.

The Value of Informal Care in 2020

Carers Australia commissioned Deloitte Access Economics to undertake research on the Value of Informal Care in 2020.^{vi} The study estimates that in 2020 there were almost 2.8 million informal carers in Australia, comprised of 906,000 primary carers and 1.9 million non-primary carers. This represents a 5.5 per cent increase since the ABS 2018 Survey on Disability, Ageing and Carers^{vii} survey due to population growth.

The research estimates that the demand for informal carers will grow from around 1.25 million in 2020 to 1.54 million in 2030, representing a 23 per cent increase.

In contrast, the supply of informal carers will rise from 674,000 to 780,000, an increase of 16 per cent. This will see the carer ratio fall by 3.2 per cent from 53.8 per cent in 2020 to 50.6 per cent in 2030.

The research by Deloitte Access Economics also explored the economic value provided by carers and found that:

- Carers in Australia provided an estimated total of 2.2 billion hours of informal care in 2020, which equates to each carer providing roughly 15 hours of care per week. This is a considerable increase from the 2015 total of 1.9 billion hours of care.
- Over one third (37 per cent) of primary carers spent more than 40 hours caring each week.
- In 2020, if informal carers were to be replaced by carers employed by the formal sector, it would cost an estimated \$36.12 per carer, per hour.
- In 2020, it is estimated that 22 per cent of primary carers were employed full-time in comparison to the general population average of 43 per cent.

The Carers Australia’s Caring Costs Us Report 2022 follows on from prior work undertaken to look at the value of informal care. Some of the key issues identified in this report include:

- The contribution of Australia’s informal carers is significant, yet not captured in economic measures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), unlike that of formal carers.
- The replacement costs of this informal care – the cost of replacing each hour of informal care with a formal sector equivalent – is valued in Australia at \$77.9 billion (in 2020).
- Someone who is a primary carer on average will lose \$17,700 in superannuation and \$39,600 in lifetime earnings each year.
- For people with a disability, about four in ten (42 per cent) who receive assistance with their care needs receive no formal support and are only assisted by family members and other informal carers.
- For older people, about one in three (33.7 per cent) who receive assistance with their care needs receive no formal support and are only assisted by informal carers.



4. What is the Carers Charter?

A key element of the Act is the Carers Charter. The Charter sets out obligations of Tasmanian Government agencies to monitor and report on the items within the Carers Charter and the Tasmanian Carer Action Plan. The legislated charter builds on previous work such as the Tasmanian Carer Policy 2016 (Appendix 1: The Tasmania Carer Policy 2016).

Under the Act each agency is required to take reasonable steps to implement the Carers Charter and monitor and report to the Minister on the steps taken to do this which will be coordinated by DPAC's Community Policy and Engagement's Division.

This refreshed Action Plan includes a new section outlining the actions and the monitoring process to ensure actions are achieved.

Carers Charter

Schedule 1, Section 5, *Carer Recognition Act 2023*

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.

Children at the Heart: Understanding the experiences and needs of informal kinship carers across Tasmania

In April 2023, the *Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act 2023* was enacted. The carer definition within the Act includes informal kinship carers. The Tasmanian Government sought the advice of Carers Tasmania, as the peak body representing carers, about the experiences and needs of informal kinship carers.

Carers Tasmania undertook a research project, *Children at the Heart: Understanding the experiences and needs of informal kinship carers across Tasmania*. The project aimed to identify and engage with informal kinship carers across Tasmania to understand their current experiences, alongside their service and support needs.

The project included 19 engagement sessions across the state and an online survey with participation including informal kinship carers and employees from various child and family centres and kinship groups.

Findings included that informal kinship carers often face various challenges, such as financial, legal, emotional, social, and health issues. They sometimes have difficulties accessing information and support services. However, there are many benefits for children in informal kinship care arrangements including the opportunity to experience a sense of belonging to a family and stability of relationships.

The report includes a range of recommendations that can be found on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website: www.dpac.tas.gov.au



2022 National Carer Survey

In 2022, Carers Australia and the Network of State and Territory Carer organisations supported Carers NSW to build on and conduct its biannual 2022 National Carer Study.^{viii}

Nationally, the typical respondent for the study was a female primary carer of working age with a high school education, not participating in paid employment and the typical person being cared for was an adult son with physical disability who is not able to be left alone for more than a few hours.

Most respondents provided 40 or more hours of care per week, and more than half had been caring for 20 years or more.

Nearly half of the carers who responded were experiencing high or very high psychological distress, and one in three felt highly socially isolated.

One in three respondents said they never get time out from their caring responsibilities, with only around half having enough time to keep on top of other responsibilities.

It was relatively uncommon for carers to be asked about their own needs when accessing services or on behalf of the person they care for. Carers reported challenges getting information about available services, and the time and energy it took to organise them. Waiting periods for services were also a common challenge.

One in four carers reported spending more money than they made in the past 12 months, and exiting employment and reducing working hours were also reported as common impacts of caring.

Of the 691 Tasmanian carers who responded to the 2022 National Carer Survey:

- The majority identified as female (75 per cent) and were aged 70 to 79 years (average age 65.5 years).
- 21.1 per cent of respondents were working while providing care.
- Most Tasmanian carers who responded to the survey were caring for a partner, and the most commonly respondents were caring for someone living with a disability.
- The average age of the people being cared for was 63.4 years.
- Most carers who responded from Tasmania cared for one person and most were the sole carer.
- Carers from Tasmania typically spent 108 hours per week caring and had been caring for 11.3 years.
- Many carers in Tasmania reported that they were financially stressed (60 per cent experienced financial stress, 10 per cent financial distress) and socially isolated (46 per cent).
- Compared to other Australians, carers in Tasmania were much more likely to be at risk of mental illness and had much lower wellbeing.

What carers have told us

“Currently, I study at high school and my parents are blind. They always need someone to help them. After school I help them a lot.”

“I love my son unconditionally even with all his little quirks. I worry every day of what will happen to him when I fall off the perch, who will care for him as I have done over the years without selfishness.”

“I like being her carer and appreciate all the help we receive from services and our community. It is, however, the hardest thing I’ve ever done and requires me to give more than I have sometimes.”





5. Action Summary – Supporting Tasmanian Carers



Action Summary

1. Recognition	2. Access and Participation	3. Learning
<p>1.1 Implement the <i>Carer Recognition Act 2023</i> and the Carers Charter (DPAC).</p> <p>1.2 Review Carers Week activities to identify opportunities to increase recognition and awareness of the role of carers (DPAC, Carers Tas).</p> <p>1.3 Investigate options for an annual Carer Forum (DPAC, MCAC).</p> <p>1.4 Identify and implement mechanisms to strengthen routine and formal identification of carers and inclusion of carers in client care planning throughout Tasmanian Government service delivery (DPAC, DECYP, DoH, PHT).</p> <p>1.5 Promote carer supports available through the Carer Gateway (DECYP, DoH, Carers Tas).</p> <p>1.6 Recommence and expand community education and awareness-raising of informal kinship care and the support available (DPAC).</p> <p>1.7 Review options for a Carer Impact Statement for new policies, programs and legislation (DPAC Policy).</p>	<p>2.1 Engage with Carers Tasmania /Care2Serve to strengthen carer identification and referral pathways in the Housing Connect process (Homes Tas).</p> <p>2.2 Review the Tasmanian State Service Workplace Flexibility Policy to support employees with caring responsibilities (SSMO).</p> <p>2.3 Maintain and enhance flexible working arrangements in State government agencies, including reviewing the Carer Toolkit and becoming an accredited Carer Employer (DPAC/SSMO).</p> <p>2.4 Review the Tasmanian Consumer and Carer Participation Framework to improve engagement with consumers and carers (DoH).</p> <p>2.5 THS Social Work Teams develop clinical guidelines for working with carers (DoH).</p> <p>2.6 Implement improved supports for informal kinship carers, utilising co-design.</p> <p>2.7 Consider how existing programs, such as the HACC program, can be sustained and expanded to support informal kinship carers, consistent with the definition of carer in the Act (DoH).</p> <p>2.8 Promote Jobs Hubs as a place where carers can get support to engage or reengage with employment, education and/or training and support the Jobs Hubs to have the information and capability to work with the needs of carers (DSG).</p> <p>2.9 Review Service Map annually to ensure it is up-to-date and connections are maintained (DPAC).</p>	<p>3.1 Develop targeted information and referral resources for learners with caring responsibilities (DECYP).</p> <p>3.2 Supported by the Carers Tasmania/ Care2Serve Schools Engagement Officer, promote resources for young carers to DECYP learners, schools, and support staff (DECYP).</p> <p>3.3 Develop resources to support the mental health and wellbeing of young carers (DoH).</p>

6. Action Plan

1. Recognition

1.1 Implement the *Carer Recognition Act 2023* and Carers Charter.

Promote the *Carer Recognition Act* (the Act) and Carers Charter through:

- Developing a communication plan in consultation with MCAC.
- Ensuring regular consideration at Heads of Agencies meetings.
- Each Agency convening workshops with senior Agency staff.
- Developing resources e.g., posters and flyers in consultation with MCAC and distributing to Agencies
- All Agencies undertaking an audit of existing Agency information and processes to identify and support carers.
- Requesting Heads of Agencies conduct an impact assessment for carers when developing and reviewing policies and programs.
- Including information about the Act and Carers Charter in induction materials for recruits to the DPAC, DECYP, and Homes Tasmania.
- Agencies developing action plan on how they are going to meet their obligations under the Act and charter.



1.2 Review Carers Week activities to identify opportunities to increase recognition and awareness of the role of carers.

All agencies will review their Carers Week activities. Depending on the agency's role, Carers Week recognition activities will have an internal (employees) and/or external focus (carers as clients).

DPAC allocated \$60,000 for a small grants program over 2021-22 to 2023-24. This provided organisations the opportunity to deliver events to celebrate National Carers Week and increase awareness of services available to carers.

All agencies will continue to promote Carers Week to increase recognition and awareness of the role of carers and encouraged to hold 'cuppa's for carers'.

Carers Week activities are often only available for carers who can travel and have time. Agencies to explore options for activities for carers that are more purposeful, with transport and respite options provided and a focus on looking after carers in consultation with MCAC.

DPAC in consultation with Carers Tas will review options for supporting non-government organisations to host Carer Week activities and the feasibility of extending the DPAC Carers Week small grants program. This could include exploring different way to encourage groups to participate, for example peer support groups who may not be an 'actual organisation' who may not have been able to apply for small grant funding.

1.3 Investigate options for an annual Carer Forum.

A one-day Carers Forum will be planned in consultation with Carers Tasmania, MHFFT and the MCAC. The forum will facilitate a space for carers to share their experiences with Tasmanian government agency representatives, to contribute to developing solutions to address emerging issues; share best practice; and identify opportunities to promote recognition of carers and access and participation.

The former Minister for Community Services and Development hosted an LGBTIQA+ themed forum in November 2022 in collaboration with Working it Out which was well received by participants. Feedback suggested that a smaller 'Round Table' style discussion was more appropriate for the audience than a larger style forum.

Each Forum had a 'themed' topic, with the priorities for 2024 being:

- A focus on people in a post-caring stage of their life, recognising the long-term impact of caring on people and the experiences that former carers have to share.
- Young carer forums held at different locations across the state.

1.4 Identify and implement mechanisms to strengthen routine and formal identification of carers through Tasmanian Government service delivery.

Review feasibility of developing a Tasmanian Carers Card based on the Victorian model in consultation with MCAC.

DECYP and DoH will review where they can routinely include collecting information on clients being a carer, and in consultation with Carers Tasmania identify processes for referral for carer support if required and to assist with ensuring that carers are included in key decision making and informed of plans for the person being cared for.

In consultation with Carers Tasmania, Primary Health Tasmania will review their eReferrals project to include identifying carers and referring them to support services.

Investigate funding sources to expand Carers Tasmania / Care2Serve school and health engagement programs to promote routine identification and referral.

DoH is developing a new Statewide policy to encompass the requirements for the implementation of the Charter associated with the new *Carer Recognition Act 2003*. A due date of 30 June 2024 has been set. This policy could also articulate the requirements for inclusion of carers within the care planning process and how they are captured within patient administration systems. The Agency Consumer Consultation and Engagement Framework is in development, and will establish the guiding principles for engagement, which would include the recognition of consumers and carers in healthcare and health care design and planning. In addition, a statewide policy will be developed which will detail the requirements for the implementation of the Framework. Locally, health services will develop a range of protocols to support and action the implementation of the Framework.

1.5 Promote supports available through the Carer Gateway.

Promote Care2Serve, Tasmania's Carer Gateway and the supports available for carers, in hospitals, health centres, Service Tasmania locations, schools and libraries.

1.6 Recommence and expand community education and awareness-raising of informal kinship care and the supports available.

Following a review of the experiences of informal kinship carers in Tasmania, Carers Tasmania recommended recommencing and expanding community education and awareness-raising of informal kinship care and the supports available.

Work done under Actions 1.5 (Promote supports available through the Carer Gateway) and 1.6 should recognise the potential for crossover and seek to coordinate messaging where possible and appropriate.

1.7 Review options for a Carer Impact Statement for new policies, programs and legislation.

DPAC to review the social/community impact statement for Cabinet submissions, which currently includes carers, to explore feasibility of including a reference to carer impact in the notes about how to complete the statement.



2. Access and Participation

2.1 Engage with Carers Tasmania / Care2Serve to strengthen carer identification and referral pathways in the Housing Connect process.

Housing Connect is the entry point for assistance for people experiencing homelessness or housing need in Tasmania. As system manager, Homes Tasmania funds and oversees Housing Connect which is collaboratively delivered by community service organisations.

Through Housing Connect people can apply for affordable private rentals, social housing and supported accommodation or access emergency accommodation. Housing Connect can also provide people with housing related support and information, advice, and referral to other support services available to them in Tasmania.

Homes Tasmania is improving the way housing assistance is delivered in Tasmania through its reform of the Housing Connect system.

From 1 July 2024, Housing Connect will improve Tasmanians' access to housing assistance with personalised support to develop strong connections to family and community and build people's capabilities for independent living.

As a result of providing a submission towards the consultation on the Draft Homes Tasmania Bill in July 2022, the Social Housing Assessment Form used by Housing Connect, has been updated to include questions about carers.

Homes Tasmania will continue to work with Housing Connect services to provide carers with the assistance and support they need.

2.2 Review the Tasmanian State Service Workplace Flexibility Policy to support employees with caring responsibilities.

A draft Workplace Flexibility Policy has been developed, however, work on this was paused as COVID-19 had an impact on how workplace flexibility is viewed and what that means for the future. The Tasmanian Government response to the State Service Review has determined a reform program over five years, with the work plan for flexible employment priorities scheduled to commence from December 2023 for 18 months. In line with Recommendation 61 of the State Service Review, SSMO has developed a draft short set of principles for TSS employees to work away from the office, drawing extensively on existing arrangements and resources and taking into consideration benefits and cautions to provide a consistent underlying basis for individual agency policies.



2.3 Maintain and enhance flexible working arrangements in State government agencies.

The State Service Carer Toolkit, launched in October 2019, supports employees to manage their work and care responsibilities. PESRAC also recommended that Government agencies should embed the flexible working arrangements used during the COVID-19 suppression period, to support the recruitment and advancement of women in the State Service (Recommendation 49). Embedding the flexible arrangements will also benefit employees who are carers.

Flexible work principles that will benefit those with caring responsibilities will be developed in Stage 2 of Action Item 2.2.

Any enhancements to flexible working arrangements will be included in the toolkit. The toolkit will be reviewed to ensure it reflects the flexible work principles. The definitions and legislation within this toolkit will also need updating in line with the Act.

Government will also explore how they can lead the way by undertaking the Carer and Employers Accreditation program.

2.4 Review of the Tasmanian Consumer and Carer Participation Framework.

Review the Tasmanian Consumer and Carer Participation Framework to be more contemporary and evidence-based, which will support improved engagement with consumers and carers in consultation with MCAC.

Tasmania's Consumer and Carer Participation Framework specific to Mental Health is in development/finalisation is being reviewed with the view to develop an implementation plan for the endorsed framework, which will include creation of local protocols. Additionally, the Department is reviewing the 2006 Mental Health Service Consumer and Carer Participation Framework. This work is being led by the Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Directorate (MHADD) under Rethink 2020, Tasmania's overarching mental health plan.



2.5 THS Social Work Teams to develop clinical guidelines for working with carers.

The THS Social Work Teams will develop clinical guidelines, in consultation with the Care2Serve Health Engagement Officer, to provide information about the role of carers in the medical journey, including referring carers to other support services as required.

Work is currently being undertaken to develop a process for carers of people with disability in hospital, as well as a governance mechanism and risk assessment. This could be expanded to reflect the definition of carer under the *Carer Recognition Act 2023*.

2.6 Implement improved supports for informal kinship carers, utilising co-design.

This Action focusses on extending ongoing DPAC work around engaging the wider community kinship care sector so that the views of carers and providers can inform improved awareness and effectiveness of supports.

DoH will review how well services understand informal kinship and the support mechanisms needed to work in partnership with those undertaking informal kinship roles, including how this is captured within patient records for consent and information sharing processes.

DECYP note that this action needs to be cognisant of other work being undertaken to implement Commission of Inquiry (COI) recommendations relating to Out Of Home Care in Tasmania. Significant change to the management of the sector will occur over the next 2-3 years and this recommendation may need to be nuanced to reflect this (Appendix 2: Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings Report - Recommendations).

2.7 Consider how existing programs, such as the HACC program, can be expanded to support informal kinship carers, consistent with the definition of carer in the Act.

Supports including workshops and psychosocial education are currently provided for carers in Tasmania under the Home and Community Care Program (HACC). However, despite the definition of carer in the Act including informal kinship carers, they are not eligible to participate in activities provided through the HACC program. In addition, carers aged over 65 years are ineligible. The implications of broadening the program to include informal kinship carers and carers over 65 years will be investigated.

2.8 Promote Jobs Hubs as a place where carers can get support to engage or reengage with employment, education and/or training and support the Jobs Hubs to have the information and capability to work with the needs of carers.

The Tasmanian Government has established a network of Jobs Hubs across the State to assist job seekers in securing local employment. Child and Youth Family Centres (CYFCs) are very well connected to Jobs Hubs and a gateway for young parents. Jobs Tas is also working with DPAC on an extension of work of Brave Foundation in CYFCs.

2.9 Review Service Map annually to ensure it is up-to-date and connections are maintained.

The Service Map comprises programs and services that are ongoing, continuing or 'business as usual'. This does not mean that these programs are static. The significant disruption to service delivery during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic meant that many programs and services had to adapt, and as recovery measures are embedded, it will be important that the needs of carers are taken into account.

Tasmanian Government agencies will review the Service Map annually and provide updates. Agencies will only be required to report to MCAC on these activities and programs 'by exception' – that is when there is a significant change to the service, eligibility or other policy settings. The current Service Map is available on the DPAC website.



3. Learning

3.1 Develop targeted information and referral resources for learners with caring responsibilities.

DECYP will update its information and referral resources for learners with caring responsibilities that are a barrier to engagement at school.

DECYP incorporated an 'Young Carers' indicator on the online Case Management Platform (CMP), which was launched in September 2022. The associated definition is "A child or young person who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend. This may include providing emotional support, support with practical tasks, medical care, personal care and advocacy support." The purpose of the CMP Vulnerability Management Module is to support young carers and their families through capturing, managing and sharing student vulnerability information across the agency by relevant staff, including School Support and Wellbeing Team Leads. The DECYP website was updated in time for the new website relaunch in October 2023. The website includes links to support services for young carers and a link to a resource for schools to assist with identifying and supporting young carers.

Carers Tas/Care2Serve are working with DECYP on a pilot project in Southern Tasmania schools. This involves a full-time School Engagement Officer working with schools in the South / South East of the state, focusing on the identification of young carers; awareness



raising amongst teachers, support staff and students about caring; and the development of bespoke resources.

DECYP will develop brochures and other resources to support young carers and their families in collaboration with Care2Serve and young carers.

3.2 Promote resources for young carers to Department for Education, Children and Young People learners, schools, and support staff.

DECYP will promote the new resources and related supports available for young carers to learners, schools, and professional support staff.

This action item will follow on from Action 3.1 and will include a plan to promote resources to learners, families, schools, and support staff.

3.3 Develop resources to support young carers mental health and wellbeing.

DoH will develop resources in consultation with MCAC and young carers to develop resources in partnership with Mental Health Lived Experience Tasmania and Mental Health Families and Friends to support young carers health and wellbeing. These will be made available to mental health, school staff, and THS staff to support young carers accessing these services.



Appendices

Appendix 1: Tasmania Carer Policy (2016)

The Tasmania Carer Policy was released in 2016. Its aim was to recognise the commitment of Tasmanian carers and support them in their caring role as well as supporting active participation in economic, social and community life for themselves and the people for whom they care. The Policy Objectives were to:

- Increase the level of recognition of carers.
- Improve the level of support and services to carers.
- Involve carers in the development and evaluation of policies, programs and services. that affect them and their caring role.

These objectives informed the development of the Tasmanian Carer Action Plan 2017-2020 (the first Action Plan) which contained 22 actions.

The Principles underpinning Supporting Tasmanian Carers are as follows:

1. Carers are to be acknowledged and treated as individuals with their own needs within and beyond their caring role.
2. Carers are to be acknowledged as a diverse group of people, coming from all walks of life and life stages.
3. Carers are to be provided with relevant and accessible information and referred to appropriate services to assist them in their caring role.
4. Carers are to be respected as valued members of a care team.
5. Carers expertise and experience are recognised and used in the development and evaluation of policies, programs and services that affect them and the people receiving care.
6. The development, evaluation and delivery of policies, programs and services for carers are to take into account carers' age, gender identity, sexual orientation, cultural and linguistic background, abilities, religion, geographical location and socio-economic status.
7. To the extent possible, carers are to be supported to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing, and access to educational and employment opportunities.
8. The carer and the person receiving care are to be regarded as a partnership, in which each person has rights and responsibilities.
9. Complaints by carers on decisions and services that affect them and their caring role are to be resolved promptly and without any fear of reprisal.
10. Government agencies are to be given appropriate support to understand and respond to the needs of carers.

Appendix 2: Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings Report - Relevant Recommendations

Recommendation 9.11

4. In its role of overseeing the out of home care system, the Department for Education, Children and Young People should:
 - a. determine the core knowledge and skills required for staff in non-government organisations providing carer assessment and support, and for residential, foster and kinship carers

Recommendation 9.12

1. The Department for Education, Children and Young People should ensure the Foster and Kinship Carers Handbook is updated to include:
 - a. information applicable to all carer types
 - b. more information on child sexual abuse, including harmful sexual behaviours and child sexual exploitation
 - c. mandatory reporting requirements for carers
 - d. the professional conduct policy for foster and kinship carers.
2. The Department should:
 - a. make the Handbook available publicly on its website
 - b. ensure the Handbook is regularly updated in line with any relevant changes to policy.

Recommendation 9.20

1. The Department for Education, Children and Young People should establish and maintain a Carer Register of all types of carers in the out of home care setting to ensure all third-party guardians, and foster, respite, kinship, and salaried residential carers can provide quality care to children and act protectively.
3. The minimum requirements for carer registration should include:
 - a. current Registration to Work with Vulnerable People and satisfactory National Police Checks
 - b. best practice and tailored approaches to foster, kinship and residential carer screening and assessment

4. The Department should provide for kinship carers to be provisionally registered for 12 months after assuming care of a child. During this time kinship carers should be required to complete their mandatory training requirements or apply for an exemption in exceptional circumstances.
5. Non-government out of home care providers should support kinship carers to access and complete the mandatory training required for full registration as a carer. The mandatory training should contain measures to overcome literacy difficulties, cultural difference or geographical remoteness.

Recommendation 9.21

To improve placement stability and the oversight of the care of children by third party guardians, the Department for Education, Children and Young People should:

- a. make publicly available the criteria and process for a carer to become a third party guardian
- b. sufficiently resource the team responsible for third-party guardianship applications to ensure appropriate assessments and timely processing
- c. require third-party guardians to be registered on the Carer Register to maintain their guardianship
- d. ensure third-party guardians receive the same level of support in their caring role as received by foster or kinship carers
- e. ensure children in third-party guardianship arrangements continue to have their safety and wellbeing supported and monitored (for example, through independent community visitors (Recommendation 9.34)).

Recommendation 9.25

The Department for Education, Children and Young People should improve placement stability and reduce the risk of sexual abuse of children in care by:

- f. funding all placements (including kinship, foster, respite and residential care) to fully meet all the child's assessed needs to the extent these are not covered by other schemes (such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme and public health or education services).



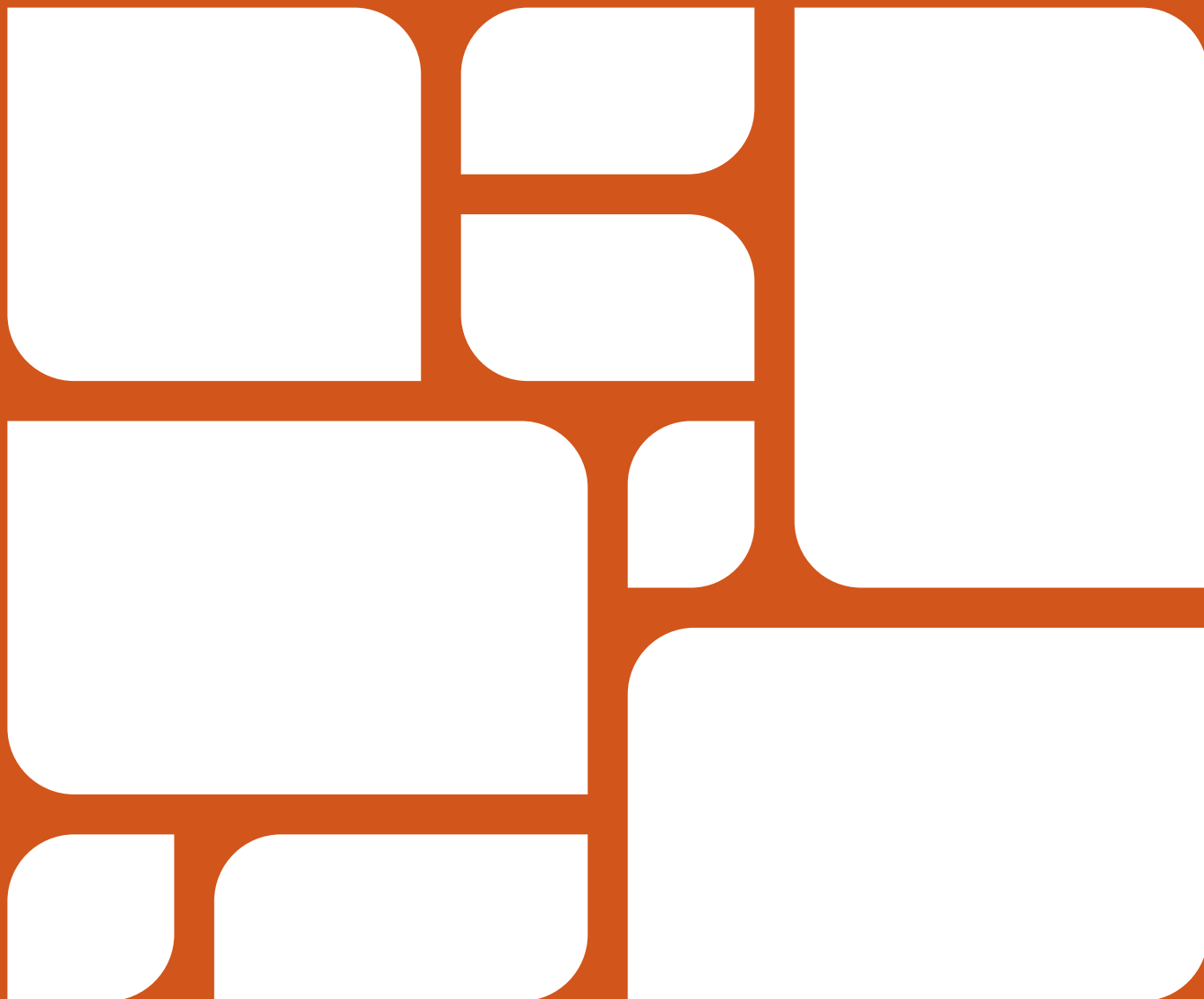


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1. ABS (2018). *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia*.
2. Caring Fairly (2020). *COVID-19 Carer Survey*.
3. Carers NSW (2022). *National Carer Survey*.
4. Carers Tasmania (2022). *COVID Impact Survey 2022 Results*.
5. Deloitte Access Economics (2020). *The Value of informal care in 2020. Carers Australia*.
6. Mental Health Carers Australia (2020). *Survey on Impacts of COVID-19 on Families and Carers of NDIS Participants with Psychosocial Disability*.
7. Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council [*Interim report*](#) July 2020
8. Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council [*Final report*](#) March 2021

Endnotes

- i Note: unpaid carers includes people who receive the Australian Government Carer Payment or Carer Allowance. The Carer Allowance is an income supplement of \$144.80 per fortnight. Carer Payment is income and assets tested and paid at the same rate as other social security pensions.
- ii The Carer Gateway commenced operation in April 2020.
- iii Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies (2023), [*Language Matters*](#)
- iv ABS (2018) Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Tasmania, 2018 Data Cube 44300do006.
- v [*Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings methodology, 2018 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)*](#)
- vi Deloitte Access Economics (2020) The Value of Informal Care in 2020.
- vii ABS (2018) Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, Key Statistics, Carers.
- viii Carers NSW (2020), National Carer Study, Summary Report.



If you are deaf, have a hearing impairment or have complex communication needs, phone the National Relay Service on 13 36 77 or the Speech-to-Speech Relay Service on 1300 555 727.



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