



Plan for

South Australian **Carers**

*2009*



Government of  
South Australia



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Plan for South Australian Carers 2009

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## Foreword by Hon Jennifer Rankine MP,

Minister for Families and Communities

Carers are the foundation of our current system of community care in Australia. Significant social, technological and demographic changes in recent years have had a profound impact on the way care is provided. Changes in family structures have also had an impact. Families are now smaller than they were a generation ago. They are more diverse in terms of make up, are often more mobile and separate in terms of lifestyles and where they live.

The caring role is often one that is arrived at unexpectedly. Providing care to another person can have a significant impact on the carer's own health and wellbeing and may mean life opportunities such as paid work, education, leisure and even relationships are compromised.

Caring will affect most of us sometime in our life – either as a carer or as someone in need of care. We know carers can be children, young people, adults and older people. Carers provide care to partners, siblings, parents, sons, daughters, friends and neighbours. Carers are our friends and colleagues.

Amongst other things carers want to have choices in their caring roles and they want those who are not in caring roles to understand the challenges, barriers and rewards that encompass the role.

The Senate Inquiry into Better Support for Carers Report *Who Cares...?*, is providing both national recognition of the caring role and an opportunity for the whole country to work together to better support carers.

I am very pleased to support the directions contained in this Plan for South Australian Carers. This Plan has been both a challenge and opportunity to reflect on how we as large and complex organisations, consider, engage and respond to carers.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all those people who have freely given of their time to contribute to the development of our Plan. We have a long road to travel in ensuring that our diverse communities acknowledge and respond to the carer's voice. This Plan provides a roadmap for the start of that journey.



**Hon Jennifer Rankine MP**

Minister for Families and Communities



## Our Vision

Carers will be acknowledged, valued and supported in South Australia.

### Introduction

This first Plan for South Australian Carers sets the vision and key priorities for the Department for Families and Communities to support and respond to carers in South Australia over the next twelve months.

### What will we build on?

This Plan builds on the strong foundation of the South Australian Government's commitment to supporting carers through the *South Australian Carers Recognition Act 2005*, South Australian Carers Charter and Carers Policy. This Plan further expands on that commitment by recognising and responding to the significant contribution that carers make to sustain and enhance our communities.

The values which inform our vision for carers are developed from extensive consultations with individual carers, carer representative bodies and state government agencies.


This Plan is designed to provide the road map to improving services to carers in a way that acknowledges and supports them in their caring role. We will strive to make a positive difference to the lives of carers and for those to whom they provide care.

A commitment by all stakeholders to work collaboratively in the development of strong and responsive systems will be fundamental to the success of this Plan.

We undertake to report our progress and achievements against the key priorities outlined in this document as we continue to build and grow efficient and effective service systems that listen, respect and respond to the carer's voice.

South Australia's Strategic Plan outlines six objectives based on the core idea of creating opportunity. The six objectives are:

1. Growing Prosperity
2. Improving Wellbeing
3. Attaining Sustainability
4. Fostering Creativity and Innovation
5. Building Communities
6. Expanding Opportunity



In 2009, the Department for Families and Communities released its own Five Year Strategic Plan focusing on what we can do to drive change, create opportunities and make improvements to achieve a better life for South Australians.

The outcomes contained within our Plan for South Australian Carers builds upon, aligns and supports the achievement of government's broader strategic agenda. This provides a robust policy framework upon which to build our vision and directions for carers in South Australia.

In 2005, the *Carers Recognition Act* was proclaimed into legislation. The Act aims to:

- Recognise and support carers and their role in the community
- Enshrine the SA Carers Charter in legislation (Schedule 1 of the Act)
- Require that certain organisations report on the actions taken to reflect the Principles of the SA Carers Charter in the provision of services relevant to carers and the persons they care for.

#### **How will we know if we have made a difference?**

Annual reporting requirements detailed within the legislation, provide the opportunity for required Government agencies to capture and highlight their achievements in progressing the Act and SA Carers Charter.

2009 sees the introduction of a comprehensive reporting process incorporating 'traffic light' reporting, which all reporting Departments are invited to adopt. As further evidence of government's commitment to a quality approach to across government reporting on carer related issues, this system will enhance an evidence based approach. It is our intention to increase our role in monitoring progress of agency reporting on how they are furthering the Carers Charter in their agencies. The SA Carers Charter contains seven Principles:

1. Carers have choices within their caring role
2. Carers health and well-being are critical to the community
3. Carers play a critical role in maintaining the fabric of society
4. Service providers work in partnership with carers
5. Carers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need specific consideration
6. All children and young people have the right to enjoy life and reach their potential
7. Resources are available to provide timely, appropriate and adequate assistance to carers

## Carers: A South Australian profile

The *South Australian Carers Recognition Act*

These documents and processes have been adopted to provide the framework for the Plan for South Australian Carers.

### Carers: A South Australian profile

The *South Australian Carers Recognition Act 2005* (SA Government 2005) defines a carer to be a person who provides ongoing care and assistance to someone who has a disability, a chronic illness, including a mental illness, or may relate to a person who is frail and therefore needs assistance to carry out daily tasks.

Carers are seen as forming the backbone of care in the community. In recent years, the government has committed to promoting awareness of the number of individuals who provide informal care throughout South Australia.

### How many carers are there in South Australia?

Recent estimates from The Australian Bureau of Statistics's Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (conducted in 2003 and published in 2005) indicated there to be 222,700 carers in South Australia, this representing approximately 14% of the total South Australian population.

The number of carers is expected to increase in the future which will require support for carers to be a major priority in future policy directions.

- 222, 700 people in SA are carers, representing 14% of the total population
- Half of all carers (53%) are employed, with 34% working full-time and 18% part-time
- 38% of all carers are reported to be reliant on a government pension or allowance as their principal source of income
- 44% of all carers reported to fall into the "low income household" category
- 37% of carers reported to have a disability of their own

2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australian Bureau of Statistics

## Reasons South Australians take on a caring role

Figure 1 below outlines the current reasons that South Australians take on a caring role. It is clear that 'family responsibility' is the dominant reason - making up 28% of responses in the 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (2005). The second highest reason reported was 'emotional obligation' (19%).

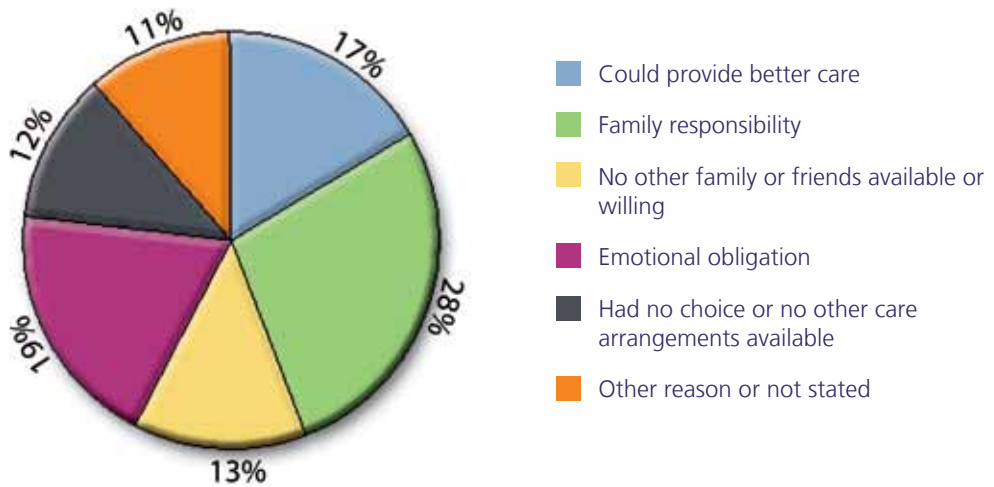


Figure 1 - Primary carers aged 15 and over: Reasons for taking on caring role - South Australia - 2003 (Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2005).

There is a slight variation in the proportion of carers who are male (47%) to those who are female (53%). However, a higher number of women reported being carers in all age groups with the exception of those over 65 years.

37,300 people in South Australia (of the 222,700 reporting a caring role) reported to be in a primary caring role, with most of this care occurring within families – 42% of primary carers were caring for their partner and 58% for a child, parent, other relative or friend. These figures illustrate that caring is a major role within families in South Australian communities.

Just under two thirds of primary carers (63%) provide at least 20 hours of care a week, with just under half (48%) providing 40 hours or more. It was also found that 37% of carers in South Australia have a reported disability themselves.

Peoples' caring responsibilities vary over the course of their lifetime and generally increase with age. This is of particular interest to our state as South Australia has the oldest population of all Australian mainland states and territories. The prevalence of care giving is highest amongst those aged 45 to 64.

Just over half of the carer population (54%) are aged 45 to 64, with 36% over 65 years. Taking into consideration the ageing of the population and the expectation that the number of older people will double over the next quarter century, the number of South Australians relying on a carer is also expected to increase. This presents a challenge, because the increased need will place pressure on the availability and willingness of family carers to provide care and also, on the capacity of funded services.

### **Carers and the workforce**

A particular focus for Department for Families and Communities over the next few years will be carers and the workforce. Almost half of all carers over the age of 15 in South Australia (44%) have reported to be economically inactive and 4% indicated to be unemployed and actively seeking employment. Just over a third of carers (34%) are in full-time employment and 18% are working part-time. With the exception of full-time employment, the economic activity profile of non-carers in the 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (2005) is similar to that of carers. Non-carers were more likely to be in full-time employment (42%) than carers (34%).

It was also found that over a third (38%) of carers in South Australia are reliant on a government pension or allowance as their principal source of income. Overall, carers are financially worse-off than non-carers with 44% of carers falling into the 'low income household' category compared to 34% of their counterparts.

It is expected that the number of carers balancing the demands of paid employment and caring responsibilities will continue to increase due to the ageing population. Therefore, pressure on carers in the workforce is an issue that needs consideration and flexible responses.

Future initiatives to improve data collection processes and explore further research on the carer topic will provide important sources of information on South Australian carers and an opportunity to explore the relationship between caring and health, wellbeing and lifestyle factors.

### **The process to develop this strategy**

The Office for Carers led the development of this Plan by engaging in a structured process of collaboration and consultation. The aim has been to challenge existing practices and thinking in relation to carers who may be either our customers or our colleagues. Identifying actions within existing strategic plans, business plans or other frameworks presented some challenges.

The end result however has been very positive. Divisions of the Department for Families and Communities have embraced the Vision and have committed to leading increased awareness and planning across business activities wherever possible. We believe that the development of this Plan and associated processes will significantly assist and improve divisions' annual reporting.

The seven Principles contained within the SA Carers Charter provide the framework for the Plan for South Australian Carers outcomes.



## Principle 1

### Carers have choices within their caring role

To have real choice, carers need to know what options are available for themselves and those they care for. Carers are a diverse group in terms of their age, profile, extent and nature of caring responsibilities. Service providers and others need to understand the many complexities associated with caring roles.

Current legislation achieves a number of significant outcomes. These include providing a clear definition of who is a carer, government reporting requirements and the Principles that provide direction for services to consult and include carers in all levels of services and service planning.

Carers need to know there are a range of protections for carers embedded in various Acts and treaties. Recent amendments to legislation including the *Equal Opportunities Act 2009* provide additional recognition of carers. With a commitment to review the *Carers Recognition Act 2005*, the opportunity already exists to ensure that legislation is relevant and reflective of contemporary principles in relation to carers.

#### **Outcome 1.1: Improve access to information to carers.**

- Support older carers of children with disabilities experiencing ageing issues.
- Increase awareness of carers and carer related issues via funded services.
- Disseminate information to carers, care recipients, and carer service providers on risk factors for abuse.
- Continue to ensure grandparents raising grandchildren are consulted in the development of information.
- Develop information for customers who are carers/carers of customers.

#### **Outcome 1.2: Review the legislative protection of carers.**

- Review the SA Carers Recognition Act 2005.
- Develop Carer Awareness Kits to assist carers to know and understand their legal rights and advocacy.
- Improved knowledge on the role of the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner.

#### **Outcome 1.3: Develop recruitment strategies for carers entering or returning to the Department for Families and Communities workforce.**

- Promote the Department for Families and Communities as an employer of choice for carers.
- Develop a Discussion Paper on Issues and Options for back to work programs for carers who have been out of the workforce for over twelve months.

## Principle 2

Carer's health and well-being are critical to the community

Carer's health, psychological well being and self esteem are influenced by the degree of recognition, acknowledgement and support afforded them in their caring role. Carers are frequently partners in care, however, they often take on the role of carer without specific knowledge or training that can significantly enhance both their caring role and personal wellbeing. The Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (2005) indicates that caring responsibilities tend to increase with age, peaking between the ages of 45 – 64 years.

Cultural expectations and family structures within our increasingly diverse communities will present challenges in how services and support to carers are provided. We know very little about some carer groups such those in same sex relationships. We are yet to develop ways to identify these carers and provide relevant information and support. These are challenges we acknowledge as we plan to move to include all carer groups.

Workforce issues, particularly within the current financial climate, may mean employers need to be convinced of the many benefits of employing and supporting people with caring responsibilities. By investigating and enabling flexible work practices, carers are not only able to participate more fully in society, but can enjoy financial benefits and reduced social isolation whilst contributing to sustaining growth in the economy.

### **Outcome 2.1: Promote greater recognition and positive images of carers.**

- Raise profile of sibling carers.
- Identify opportunities to improve self recognition of Aboriginal staff within the Department for Families and Communities who are in caring roles.
- Carer Recognition Awards.
- Continued improvement to Whole of Government implementation and compliance with the Carers Recognition Act 2005.
- Seek opportunities to contribute to national response to the Senate Inquiry into Better Support for Carers.

### **Outcome 2.2: Establish skills training programs for carers.**

- Ensure the safe provision of services by carers for the person being cared for.

### **Outcome 2.3: Develop a best practise model of workplace flexibility for workers with caring responsibilities.**

- Improve working arrangements for Department for Families and Communities employees with caring responsibilities.
- Improve mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating employee awareness and understanding of the SA Carers Charter.



## Principle 3

Carers play a critical role in maintaining the fabric of society

The term Carer is not without complexities. These complexities may affect the likelihood that an individual will identify as a carer. As a result the number of carers is considered to be vastly underestimated and carers may go unrecognised. In a number of cultures, the term carer may not be recognised as the role the carer fulfils is part of another relationship such as a parent or child.

Historically carers have not been seen as a collective group; rather they have been viewed as someone's partner, child, brother or other relative. The significant social and economic contribution that carers make to society is now being recognised and incorporated into the development of policy across a range of portfolios.

It is important that we have a good knowledge and understanding on the numbers and types of care being provided in our communities in order to assist carers continue their caring role for as long as they want to.

In 2007 Department for Families and Communities inserted a clause in all service agreements requiring funded agencies to be aware of their responsibilities and requirements associated with the *Carers Recognition Act 2005*.

### **Outcome 3.1: Develop a profile of South Australian carers.**

- Identify current data that can contribute to building a profile of South Australian carers.
- Develop a report on the profile and trends relating to carers in South Australia.

### **Outcome 3.2: Ensure funded non-government organisations comply with the *Carers Recognition Act 2005*.**

- Develop a strategy incorporating information dissemination, data collection strategies and the development of a recording and reporting system.
- Carer focus workshops for funding programs.
- Contractual requirements for funding include compliance with *SA Carers Recognition Act 2005*, Carers Charter and Policy.

### **Outcome 3.3: Improve the self recognition of carers, their roles and needs.**

- Identify needs of relinquished carers.
- Community Benefit SA workshops focus on Aboriginal carers.
- Improve carer awareness of government concessions and benefits available to eligible carers.
- Improve carer self recognition through Access2Home Care carer sustainability screening.

## Principle 4

### Service providers work in partnership with carers

The caring relationship which operates as a partnership between the service provider, the individual and their carer can provide benefits to all parties. Recognising that carers are often experts and partners in care provides valuable insight and information.

The community should not see the needs of carers completely in isolation from those to whom they provide care. Improving services and support for carers needs to consider improvements in the services and support for those they care for.

Ensuring that mechanisms and opportunities exist for maximum carer participation will provide a platform in achieving many of the Principles and goals associated with carer recognition. The needs of the individual carer should be recognised and addressed as a part of the 'caring network'.

#### **Outcome 4.1: Mechanisms exist to ensure active carer participation.**

- Ensure service providers consult and represent carers in policy and program development, strategic or operational planning.
- Staff know which housing customers are carers, or provide care to our housing customers.
- Implement the South Australian Dementia Action Plan.

#### **Outcome 4.2: Promote carers in their capacity as carer and service partner in the provision of caring services.**

- Recognise carers as active partners in the provision of services.
- Formalise the involvement of carers in the development and delivery of Domiciliary Care SA services.

#### **Outcome 4.3: Strengthen partnerships between government and community sectors.**

- Develop a framework of service delivery for ageing carers.



## Principle 5

Carers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need special consideration

Caring, within an Aboriginal context needs to consider sometimes complex kinship ties, with an emphasis on family, sharing and family support. The historical experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have resulted in higher levels of disadvantage compared to the general population. Carers may be caring for a number of people or may themselves be unwell.

Aboriginal carers have indicated they may not feel welcome by mainstream services and assumptions are made that Aboriginal people will only want to receive services from Aboriginal agencies.

### **Outcome 5.1: Provide culturally appropriate service responses to Aboriginal carers.**

- State-wide Aboriginal carer needs analysis and service model development.
- Consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers on Disability SA policy and service development.
- Housing SA staff are sensitive to Aboriginal carers' cultural needs and requirements.
- All Office for Carers information and promotional materials are provided in formats that are culturally appropriate.

### **Outcome 5.2: Develop a cohesive and integrated system for Aboriginal carers.**

- Improve culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the addition of Standard 13 to the Disability Service Standards.



**Principle 6** All children and young people have the right to enjoy life and reach their potential.

Young carers, particularly very young carers, may not be able or willing to make decisions about the caring roles they undertake. Research indicates however that outcomes for young carers are improved where the caring situation is identified early and services provided.

Young carers are generally dependant on those they have contact with, at the gateways to services, to develop and undertake processes that can assist in identifying caring responsibilities and understand the broader needs of young carers.

Young carers report concerns across a wide range of areas including a lack of awareness of their caring roles. Young people who are carers have a right to enjoy life and reach their potential, with caring responsibilities having capability to affect lifelong consequence for health, well-being and future prospects.

Work undertaken at the National Young Carers Forum *Bring Out* in November 2008 which included significant input from young carers will contribute to the national framework for action to support young carers.

**Outcome 6.1: Raise awareness of young carers and their needs at identified key access points to services and support.**

- Develop young carer information and publications that are age appropriate, easy to understand and helpful to young carers.
- Participate in the Australian Research Council funded three year study, exploring the impact of the caring role on young people.
- Identify opportunities to minimise caring responsibilities of young people who provide care.





## Principle 7

Resources are available to provide timely, appropriate and adequate assistance to carers.

Carer needs are diverse. Opportunities such as the National Inquiry into Better Support for Carers Report *Who Cares...?* and the National Disability Strategy may influence carer policy into the future and provide opportunities for collaboration across portfolios. Pilot projects linked to research can allow policy makers to get a better understanding of the issues to be resolved and the associated effectiveness of the proposed solutions.

The development of key performance indicators and other vital data collection systems linked to continuous improvement processes can facilitate better responses to carers' needs with a focus on providing the right services to carers.

In order to develop a forward strategy and plan for responding to carers is the need to capture the levels of unmet need for carers.

### **Outcome 7.1: Develop and implement evidence informed service models for carers.**

- Progress national developments relating to improving outcomes for carers.
- Assist to develop a tool to capture information on carer needs and support services.
- Provide services for a targeted group of ageing carers of people with a disability.
- Participate in Australian Research Council funded national research exploring issues for grandparents who are primary carers of their grandchildren.

### **Outcome 7.2: Services and supports for carers are improved.**

- Implement the recommendations of the DFC commissioned Report: *Responding to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Carers: Carers Voices*
- Improve the capacity of service providers to increase respite for older carers.
- Establish Home and Community Care funded carer support services state-wide.

### **Outcome 7.3: Establish a mechanism to identify and record carers' unmet needs.**

- Identify current reporting data that illustrates unmet need for carers.
- Monitor unmet need for targeted ageing carers.
- Carers' feedback is gathered.
- Analyse the services provided by Domiciliary Care SA to clients and their carers to enable better training.

## Implementing the Plan

Minister Rankine at the beginning of this document committed to progressing our actions to support carers in this state. We keenly await the Commonwealth Government's response to the *Who Cares...?* report.

The process of developing this Plan and identifying outcomes has placed carers at the front and centre of our departmental thinking. We are responding to that challenge.

The Department for Families and Communities Carers Group, comprising broad representation from across Department for Families and Communities Divisions, will have responsibility for the Plans implementation.

### **Acknowledgements and thanks to:**

The many carers who gave of their valuable time and experiences to contribute and inform the development of the Plan.

### **Whole of Government Carers Implementation Group membership**

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Mr. John Wright	Department for Premier and Cabinet
Mr. Mark Walker-Roberts	South Australian Police
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Ms. Denise Langton	Grandparents for Grandchildren
Mr. Geoff Harris	Mental Health Coalition SA
Mr. John McKellar	Alzheimers SA
Ms. Kate Priess	Carers SA
Ms. Kathryn Cunningham	Alzheimers SA
Ms. Miriam Cocking	Seniors Information Service
Mr. Nicholas Davoli	Centrelink
Ms. Paola Mason	Children of Mentally Ill Consumers
Ms. Pat Sutton	SA Health
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Ms. Trish Hall	Department for Education and Children's Services

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Ms. Enza Monterosso	Community Connect Branch
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Ms. Laura Harris	Human Resources
Ms. Natasha Rees	Office for the Ageing
Ms. Michelle Brampton	Office for the Ageing
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Ms. Susie Rodgeherio-Smith	Housing SA

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Ms. Janis Haynes	South Coast Carer Service
Ms. Anne Gawen	Carers SA
Ms. Annette Bailee	Masonic Homes

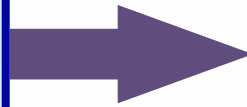
### Strategic Frameworks

SA Carers Recognition Act 2005

SA Carers Charter & Policy

South Australian Strategic Plan

DFC Five Year Strategic Plan



### Plan for South Australian Carers

#### Principles

1. Carers have choices within their caring role.
2. Carers health & well-being are critical to the community.
3. Carers play a critical role in maintaining the fabric of society.
4. Service providers work in partnership with carers.
5. Carers in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities need specific consideration.
6. All children and young people have the right to enjoy life & reach their potential.
7. Resources are available to provide timely, appropriate, & adequate assistance to carers.



#### Outcomes

- 1.1 Improve access to information to carers.
- 1.2 Review the legislative protection of carers.
- 1.3 Develop recruitment strategies for carers entering or returning to the DFC workforce.
- 2.1 Promote greater recognition and positive images of carers.
- 2.2 Establish skills training programs for carers.
- 2.3 Develop a best practice model of workforce flexibility for workers with caring responsibilities.
- 3.1 Develop a profile of South Australian carers.
- 3.2 Ensure funded non government organisations comply with the Carers Recognition Act 2005.
- 3.3 Improve the self recognition of carers, their roles and needs.
- 4.1 Mechanisms exist to ensure active carer participation.
- 4.2 Promote carers in their capacity as carer and service partner in the provision of caring services.
- 4.3 Strengthen partnerships between government and community sectors.
- 5.1 Provide culturally appropriate services responses to Aboriginal carers.
- 5.2 Develop a cohesive and integrated system for Aboriginal carers.
- 6.1 Raise awareness of young carers & their needs at identified key access points to services & support.
- 7.1 Develop and implement evidence informed service models for carers.
- 7.2 Services and supports for carers are improved.
- 7.3 Establish a mechanism to identify and record carer unmet needs.

### DFC Carers Group Members

- Business Affairs
- Community Connect
- Disability Services
- Domiciliary Care SA
- Families SA
- Housing SA
- Human Resources
- Office for the Ageing
- Office for Carers
- Office for Disability & Client Services
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