



Submission to the Department of Social
Services Discussion Paper on Integrated
Carer Support Service: Regional Delivery
Model

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AN AUSTRALIA THAT VALUES AND SUPPORTS ALL CARERS

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ABOUT CARERS WA

Carers WA is the peak body representing the needs and interests of carers in Western Australia and is part of a national network of Carers Associations. Carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have disability, mental illness, a chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail aged. The person they care for may be a parent, partner, sibling, child, relative, friend or neighbour. Illness and disability are non-discriminatory and the caring role can be borne by any individual at any given time, regardless of socioeconomic status, age or location. Caring is a significant form of unpaid work in the community and is integral to the maintenance of our aged, disability, health, mental health, and palliative care systems. A report undertaken by Deloitte, Access Economics, 'The economic value of unpaid care in Australia in 2015', determined the replacement value of the care undertaken by carers in Australia to cost \$60.3 billion per annum.

Some important facts about carers include:

- There are 2.7 million unpaid carers in Australia. More than 856,000 carers are primary carers.
- There are more than 320,000 family and friends in a caring role in Western Australia or approximately 1 in 8 in the community.

ENQUIRIES

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Introduction

Carers WA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Regional Delivery Model of the Integrated Carer Support Services. **Carers WA endorses the submission made by Carers Australia.** In this submission comments are confined to specific issues surrounding delivery of the model in Western Australia.

Limitations of statistics quoted in discussion paper

The statistics quoted in the discussion paper come from the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) undertaken in 2015. The SDAC survey has a number of limitations and the number of carers identified in this survey are considered an underestimate for WA and possibly also for Australia. The SDAC survey defines a primary carer as a person aged 15 years or over who provides the majority of ongoing informal assistance to a person with a disability who has a limitation in one of the core activity areas of self-care, communication or mobility. This definition is likely to exclude carers of people with psychosocial illness, carers of the frail aged and carers of people with chronic illness. Furthermore, SDAC is not a population survey but a sample which is then used to generalise across the whole population. The data is likely to be of limited value in determining the geographical spread of carers.

Carers WA publications currently quote the estimate of carers from the General Social Survey (GSS) undertaken in 2014, which is 320,700. However, neither the SDAC nor the GSS measures the demand for carer services and an alternative approach to determining carer numbers is required.

We believe a reasonable and equitable approach could be based on a proportion of the total population, while recognising that whatever figure is chosen is likely to be an underestimate. As at September 2017, the population of Australia was 24,702,900 and the population of Western Australia was 2,587,100 (3101.0 - Australian Demographic Statistics, Sep 2017). This means 10.47% of the population lives in WA. If the total number of carers in Australia is 2,698,700 (SDAC 2015) then 10.47% of this is 282,554. There is no reason to assume that less people in Western Australia are in need of care or that there are less carers to care for them compared with the rest of Australia. It is more likely that people are not engaging with the various surveys.

Service Areas

Carers WA does not see any benefit in splitting the Perth metropolitan area in half in Western Australia and servicing the state in two halves. This split could result in people who live in close proximity to a hub in the metropolitan area being refused service as they technically

reside in another “region”. From a service delivery perspective there seems no logical reason for splitting the metropolitan area and creating two “centres” in close proximity to each other.

Funding

The discussion paper contains no details on funding envelopes for each hub. It is important to note that Western Australia faces particular issues in providing services to a relatively small population over very large distances. The challenges faced within Western Australia are brought to light in the research into carers in regional and remote Australia entitled “The tyranny of distance” (2009 by Commonwealth Financial Planning, Carers Australia and the Australian Institute of Family Studies). The research covers a range of issues for carers and identifies that carers are often higher in proportion to the population than in urban areas. The research identifies that carers have higher rates of disability themselves and, unsurprisingly, services to support them are limited and hard to access. Inevitably, these services will cost more to deliver. Any funding formula should take into account the sparse population distribution across large geographic areas.