



The Next Chapter

Carers Victoria
Strategic Directions
2008 - 2012



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INTRODUCTION

Carers Victoria is the statewide peak organisation representing carers, and a member of the National Network of Carers Associations.

Carers Victoria is a non-profit association which relies on public and private sector support to fulfil its mission with and on behalf of carers.

The Board of Carers Victoria is proud to present these Strategic Directions, that build on the strong foundations of achievement thus far, and respond to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

This plan will guide Carers Victoria in focus, strategy and action to 2012 and provide a framework for reviewing our performance.

OUR VISION

Caring is a shared community responsibility

OUR MISSION

Leading change and action for carers

OUR CORE BUSINESS

- › Carer advocacy and representation
- › Research and policy development
- › Carer services and programs
- › Education and training – for carers and for workers in the care system
- › Influencing change in the services and institutions that support carers

THE CHANGES WE WORK FOR

Carers enjoy improved health, wellbeing, resilience and financial security

- › Access to high quality and flexible services
- › Choice in caring and support options
- › Improved carer entitlements
- › Choices and balance in work and family responsibilities

Caring is recognised as a shared responsibility of family, community, business and government

- › Increased public awareness of caring and carers' issues
- › Health and community care services are carer inclusive, responsive and well coordinated
- › National carer legislation and policy
- › Increased government, community and corporate support for carers





THE CONTEXT

Becoming a carer can happen to anyone at anytime. Carers are as diverse in their needs, lifestyles and identity as the broader population. Their profile includes children, young people and men and women of all ages. Each care situation is different. For the people involved, it is a highly personal experience, always intertwined with other family and work roles, relationships and demands.

Individuals and families want choices about care options and have long preferred supported community care or informal care over institutional arrangements. With changing expectations about the balance of work, leisure and family life at different points in people's lives, individual capacity to care and to continue to contribute to community life becomes an issue for employers, government and families.

Care situations always involve at least two people, each with distinct rights and needs. Our future focus will be on changing the health and community care systems so they can be more responsive to the needs and voices of carers and of the people they support. We will have succeeded when specialist carer services are no longer needed – that is, when mainstream services are responding in a holistic way to people needing care and the people around them, paid and unpaid, who are sharing the care.

Carers have received greater attention in recent years. However their need for understanding, recognition and support remains a pressing community issue. Family carers are the backbone of community care provision. They will be a diminishing resource unless we address the factors that make caring a difficult choice and a hard experience – until we see caring as a shared responsibility.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY ~ OUR FUTURE COMMUNITY VISION

When caring is a shared community responsibility we will see communities and institutions doing things differently for people needing and providing care:

- › Caring and mutuality will stand alongside economic prosperity and environmental sustainability as important measures of wellbeing.
- › The community will rally to demand new service solutions and standards of care, and greater choice in the balance between family and community care provision.
- › There will be positive discrimination in taxation to compensate for the financial costs of caring and to recognise the contributions made by carers.
- › There will be new models of care shaped by the way people want to care and be cared for, rather than institutional models defined by old assumptions or fragmented programs that are trying to plug gaps.
- › Neighbourhoods and communities of interest will find new ways to build care support networks and exchange arrangements.
- › The value and rewards of caring will become a focus in schools and educational institutions.
- › Governments, employers, businesses and individuals will contribute to the resource pool that provides for a basic universal entitlement to care and support.





HOW WE WILL BE KNOWN

Carers Victoria will continue to build its reputation as the expert voice for carers, with recognition and respect growing to new levels across all sectors of the Victorian community.

In the eyes of carers and the community we will be:

- › Bold and innovative in what we do
- › Forthright in representing carers' needs and issues
- › Known for quality and excellence in services and programs
- › Sought after for opinion, advice and solutions
- › Independent of government and all political parties
- › Well-governed and accountable to carers, funders and key partners

OUR PRIORITY WORK

Community influence

Promoting the vision of shared responsibility for caring through changes to legislation, policy, service systems, regulation, new models of care and increased public awareness of, and respect for carers.

Improving services and carer programs provided by Carers Victoria

Continuously improving carer advisory, counselling and respite services, so that we have the experience and credibility to model carer friendly and responsive services to others.

Developing new service models and facilitating choice in care options

Developing services that demonstrate our commitment to excellence and innovation in designing and developing new services and programs, particularly those that focus on care in a total way and that promote choice in care options. Ideally new services can be easily replicated in the mainstream service system.

Influencing employers and work-related legislation

Encouraging employers to see the business case for being carer friendly and providing information, advice and education to assist them to change employment conditions and better support carers.

Mobilising employers in different sectors to advocate for change to policy and legislation.

Being an agent for change in service systems and institutions

Working to remove the barriers carers face in their dealings with everyday institutions and services and to promote carer friendly and respectful processes.

Providing education and training to workers in the health and community care system

Recognising and rewarding good practice and promoting this experience to others.

Improving life for carers in regional Victoria

Strengthening support for carers in non-urban regions by enabling the establishment of carer networks, advocating for equity in resources and services and ensuring statewide planning takes account of areas that have high levels of unmet need or that experience poor service quality.

Winning hearts and minds - communicating with a broader audience

Using sophisticated marketing and communication strategies to reach new audiences and to enhance awareness and foster engagement with caring as a community issue.

Using carer stories and a wide range of media and other mechanisms to get our messages across.

Participation in, and active partnership with, the National Network of Carers Associations

Contributing to the National Network in a positive and proactive way and playing our part in delivering on a common national agenda, and learning and exchange across associations.

Keeping Carers Victoria strong

Continuing to invest in and improve organisational capacity at a governance, management and operational level and developing our staff and volunteers.

Growing our resource base and aligning our use of funds and skills with strategic intent, based on evidence of where Carers Victoria can be most effective.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- › Carer centred practice
- › Carer participation in decisions
- › Family friendly and inclusive processes
- › Equity and fairness
- › Recognising cultural diversity
- › Respect for Indigenous culture and heritage
- › A skilled and valued workforce
- › Future orientation and learning
- › Working from an evidence base
- › Collaboration and partnership
- › Openness and accountability



