



Family &
Community Services

NSW Carers Advisory Council Achievements Report

December 2010 – October 2012

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1 Message from the Minister

It is my pleasure to introduce the first Achievements Report of the NSW Carers Advisory Council. As the initial sponsor of the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2010* which legislated for the Council to be established, it is now very pleasing to see the Council fully operational and achieving real changes for carers in NSW.

There is still much work to do in the area of recognising and valuing the 850,000 carers in NSW who provide unpaid support to people who need it because of disability, mental illness, chronic health conditions, frail age or dementia. However, progress is being made. One of the strengths of the Council is raising the profile of carers and increasing the carer voice in broader planning initiatives and reforms. Several Council members represent carers on a number of advisory bodies and have participated in a range of consultations.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and dedication of the Council and thank all members for their contribution. The majority of Council members have direct experience of being a carer and I would particularly like to thank those people for openly sharing their experiences and providing invaluable practical advice which is leading to policy change. I look forward to continuing to be Chair of the Council and to reporting on its future achievements.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Constance". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrew Constance
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services

2 Background

The NSW Carers Advisory Council (Council) was established under the *NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010* (the Act).

The objectives of the Act are to promote the recognition of carers through:

- enacting a Carers Charter that recognises the role and contribution of carers to our community and to the people they care for
- acknowledging and increasing awareness of the valued contribution that carers make to our community.

The Council provides advice to the NSW Government on legislation, policy and other matters that have a significant impact on carers.

The Council held its inaugural meeting in December 2010, followed by a planning day in March 2011. The Council usually has three full Council meetings each year, with additional working group meetings being held intermittently.

2.1 Council membership

Council members are appointed by the Minister for Disability Services and endorsed by NSW Cabinet.

Chair Hon. Andrew Constance MP, Minister for Disability Services and Minister for Ageing

Carer representatives

Eleven of the Council members have current or previous experience of being a carer. These members have a diverse range of backgrounds and expertise and come from a range of metropolitan and regional areas within NSW.

Mrs Deborah Bewick
Mrs Nan Bosler OAM
Ms Marylou Carter
Ms Maryann Housham
Ms Elizabeth Ingram
Mrs Cheryl Koenig
Ms Yvonne Quadros (appointed April 2012)
Ms Carolyn Quinn
Ms Catharine Retter
Mr Peter Stevens
Ms Tabitha Wilson

Directly appointed representatives

Ms Elena Katrakis, Chief Executive Officer, Carers NSW

Professor Deborah Brennan PhD, Social Policy Research Centre,
University of NSW

Executive Director, Office for Carers, NSW Department of Family
and Community Services

Senior Executive, NSW Ministry of Health

The Hon. Kevin Humphries MP, Minister for Mental Health,
Healthy Lifestyles and Western NSW (from May 2012)

Secretariat support

The Carers Advisory Council is supported by the Office for Carers (OfC),
NSW Department of Family and Community Services.

2.2 Council goals

The goals the Council wished to achieve for carers in NSW directly echo those contained in the NSW Carers Charter, namely to provide advice to the Minister on strategies to:

- 1** respect the rights of carers and provide them with the same opportunities, choices and respect as other Australians.
- 2** improve carers' health and wellbeing.
- 3** provide carers with a voice and ensure that their views are reflected in policies and programs that effect their lives and the lives of people they care for.
- 4** raise awareness and understanding of carers and the important role they play in the community.
- 5** remove barriers and enhance carer access to appropriate services and support.
- 6** acknowledge the different needs and issues affecting individual carers and ensure a service system is responsive to these differences.

3 Council workplan

The Council workplan was developed following a planning day held in March 2011 and was endorsed by the Council in August 2011.

The council identified five priority areas:

- a Provide advice on the implementation of the NSW *Carers (Recognition) Act 2010* and strategies for promoting awareness of the Carers Charter.
- b Identifying systemic barriers and key operational constraints that affect carers and effective solutions for Government and community action.
- c Providing advice on methods to raise awareness of available carer services and supports and recommending ways to make the service system easier to navigate for diverse carers.
- d Providing advice to inform the NSW position on national reviews and reforms related to carers.
- e Advising on the Young Carer Strategy and supports for other priority carer groups.

The Council workplan was reviewed by Council at the 31 July 2012 Council meeting. This review was followed by updating the Council workplan and development of this report to reflect the Council's progress and achievements to date.

Council working groups

In order to maximise the ability of the Council to achieve all the workplan priorities, which cover several areas, a number of smaller working groups have developed. To date three working groups have formed, which are:

- Supporting Young Carers
- Supporting Aboriginal Carers
- Engaging GPs.

4 Achievements

Priority A – Provide advice on the implementation of the *NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010* and strategies for promoting awareness of the Carers Charter.

A.1 Policy framework for government

A.2 Carer assessments

A.3 Implementation and promotion of the Act and Charter

A.4 Private sector engagement

- The Council has been engaged in regular updates from the OfC on the implementation of the Act and reviewed the Act Implementation Plan in 2011.
- Resources have been developed to support the implementation of the Act, including a brochure for the general community and two posters to be displayed in the workplace. Invaluable Council feedback resulted in a stronger carer voice in these publications.
- Invitations have been extended to human service public sector agencies to seek advice from Council on carer policy and implementing the Act.
- Assessment processes are being considered as part of the NSW Government's significant reform to person centred approaches and individualised funding for people with disability.
- Council has provided advice to Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) on how carers could be involved in assessment processes during a presentation on person centred approaches at the 31 July 2012 Council meeting.
- Several Council members actively participated in the NSW 2011 and 2012 Carers Awards selection panels.

Priority B – Identifying systemic barriers and key operational constraints that affect carers and effective solutions for Government and community action.

B.1 Identify systemic barriers and solutions.

B.2 Identified priority issues:

(A) flexible respite

(B) streamlined forms and documentation

(C) Home and Community Care (HACC) service provision rigidity

(D) transition supports

B.3 *Stronger Together 2*

- Council feedback has led to reducing the requirement for multiple assessments for flexible respite for people with disability.
- Council provided advice to ADHC on important key messages to communicate to carers regarding *Stronger Together 2* reforms, including flexible respite options and the benefits of flexible respite at the 7 June 2011 meeting.
- Council identified that completing multiple medication forms for different respite service providers was an unnecessary duplication and time consuming. This feedback led to the development of a standardised medication form which has now been implemented across all ADHC respite services. ADHC is working with the non-government sector to promote the use of the standardised medication template in disability respite services.
- Council feedback emphasised the importance of HACC services incorporating the carer's needs into service delivery. Council discussions with ADHC clarified that carers are considered as part of the HACC client group and this message has been reiterated to ADHC regional staff.
- As part of the *Stronger Together 2* transition to person centred approaches, extensive consultation has taken place with carers of people with disability. Several members of the Council actively participated in these consultations.
- Council has also provided advice directly to ADHC on the transition to person centred approaches, including how carers would like to be involved and what information carers would like to have.
- A Council representative participates in the Person Centred Approaches Ministerial Reference Group to represent the carer perspective.

- A Council representative participates in the Supportive Living Fund Working Group and has provided the Council with regular updates.
- Council expressed concern to the Minister of Education regarding the disruptions to the Assisted School Transport program in early 2012 and the impact this had on carers.

Priority C – Providing advice on methods to raise awareness of available carer services and supports and recommending ways to make the service system easier to navigate for diverse carers.

C.1 Carer service information

C.2 Better navigation of the system via:

- a) health practitioners
- b) key employers

- As part of *Stronger Together 2* reforms, Carers NSW has been funded to coordinate a Carer Support Group program for carers of people with disability. Council has provided advice on the benefits of carer support groups and what constitutes effective carer support.
- Council has hosted presentations on examples of good practice in supporting carers.
- The Council GP Engagement Working group was formed in April 2012 and is developing partnerships with key stakeholders including the Royal Australian College of GPs. The working group has identified a range of opportunities to increase GP awareness of carers, including exploring developing information packs for Medicare Locals and education/professional development opportunities.
- Council influenced the contents of the Carers Charter posters which will be distributed to employers.

Priority D – Providing advice to inform the NSW position on national reforms and reforms related to carers.

D.1 National reviews and reforms, including but not limited to: Carers Framework, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Inquiry into older Australians, COAG, Hospital and Health reforms, Mental Health reforms.

- Council provided feedback on the NSW Implementation Plan of the National Disability Strategy.
- Council provided feedback on the National Carers Strategy Implementation Plan.
- A Council member is a member of the National Register of Mental Health Consumers and Carers.

Priority E – Advising on the Young Carers Strategy and supports for other priority carer groups.

E.1 Young carers identification resource

E.2 Young carer reforms

E.3 Priority carer groups

- Professor Saul Becker, a Young Carer expert and researcher from the UK, met with Council in March 2011 to share current research about young carers.
- A Supporting Young Carer Working Group of Council formed and has provided invaluable advice including ideas for how the NSW resource (*Identifying and supporting young carers: A guide for service providers*) website and eLearning tool could be promoted and advice to the Department of Education and Communities on their Young Carers resource.
- Council hosted a forum on how to improve support for Aboriginal Carers in November 2011. Advice provided by Aboriginal carers and service providers is helping inform the development of the NSW Aboriginal carers strategy.

- Based on Council feedback and consultations to date, the broad themes of the NSW Aboriginal carers strategy have been identified as: improved support for carers in contact with the criminal justice system, information about services for Aboriginal carers, support for young carers and cultural competency training for staff.
- Council's Aboriginal carer representative is an active member of the ADHC Aboriginal Advisory Committee that provides advice to ADHC on the formulation of policy and strategic planning, for implementation of a coordinated approach to culturally inclusive services.

5 Next steps for the Council

Following the review of the Council's workplan in July 2012, the Council has decided to continue with the same five priority areas, with an increased focus on cross-government partnerships. Some specific areas the Council will focus on for the remainder of its term (to December 2013) include:

- continuing to provide advice on the implementation of the Act
- providing advice on how to engage with employers, particularly in the private sector, to better support working carers
- continuing to advise on the development of the NSW whole of Government Aboriginal carers strategy
- continuing to work with GPs and other health practitioners to increase awareness and support for carers
- considering the benefits of having a carer passport, particularly for young carers
- advising on information systems and communication strategies that would enable carers from diverse backgrounds to have easier access to the information they need.

For further information on the content of this report, please email nswcac@facs.nsw.gov.au



**Family &
Community Services**

Office for Carers

**Department of Family
and Community Services**

Level 6, 83 Clarence Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Phone 02 9377 6000