



In early February 2021, the Carers SA’s “Time Out for Carers” survey consulted with 701 carers from across South Australia on the future planning of services that could ease the way for carers to access (short) breaks from their caring role.

## Key Summary of what carers told us



**Carer Wellbeing** - Carers health and wellbeing is an ongoing concern. More carers rated their overall wellbeing below the mid-point which is indicated by the star on the left graphic.

Of specific interest is that

- **13%** of carers who reported their general wellbeing as **positive** in the top 1/3 of the scale (incl. excellent wellbeing 10:10), compared to
- **31%** of carers who reported their general wellbeing **negative** - within the bottom 1/3 of the scale (incl. extremely low wellbeing - 1 out of 10),
- **yet, 68% had never accessed any carer respite or retreats.**
- Carers’ comments in the survey pointed towards substantial stress levels, isolation and describe themselves often as ‘worn out’, or carers experience their own health challenges.

### Carer preferences - Breaks from caring role

- Carers listed their **top 3 preferences** for taking a break away from their caring role. Here are the break options that ranked the highest with carers.
  1. **68%** would love to have a short overnight stay away at a **holiday rental**
  2. **50%** of carers listed an outing / attending **an event with other carers**
  3. **49%** would like to spend a **night away at a central city location.**
  4. **44%** would like to take part in a **weekend away with other carers**

### Carer preferences – Activities carers like to do during a break

Most carers crave short activities / events, either alone or with other carers. Carers had an option to select specific activity categories that they would be interested to attend as a time out / carer break activity Carers could choose as many options as appealed to them.

**Carers showed a clear preference for activities that included the attendance at cultural events (ie: museum, concerts, cinema, theatre = 53%) and arts and crafts activities of interest (=38%) compared to attending topical workshops (i.e.: supporting carer wellbeing or care related topics = between 13%and 25%).**

Most carers (65%), also opted to do something on their own, away from the caring role, which we called ‘*doing my own thing*’. Many carers commented here, listing the small but simple things in life, like going for a walk, getting a hair cut, popping out for a coffee with a friend, attending an exercise class etc. Although 64% of carers also selected this as a valid option and may or may not always

require the funding support for this carer activity option, many would require alternative care arrangements which would require funding support.

Table 2: Preferred activities during breaks

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Arts or crafts activity of interest	37.61%	252
Workshop specifically supporting carer wellbeing	25.37%	170
Workshop/course on a care related topic	13.73%	92
Attending a cultural event (concert, theatre, cinema, museum)	53.73%	360
I prefer not to attend any of these options	2.69%	18
I just want to have a break and do 'my own thing'	64.93%	435
Total Respondents: 670		

### Main reasons why carers don't have a break

Carer commented that

- Due to the demands of their caring role, taking a break is often either not feasible due to individual circumstances, or too hard to organise. Carers also reported that often there just is not enough time or energy to organise a break or other activities away from the caring role.
- Nearly a quarter of carers (23%) are unable to access any opportunities to attend any social activity or take a break due to financial hardship.
- Nearly half of carers would require either in-home (29%), or out of home (17%) replacement care services for the person(s) requiring care. With limited options available for these services (including planned respite) and often prohibiting cost involved – even a short, few hours break is often outside the realm of possible for that group of carers.

Table 3: Required alternative care services:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No alternative care arrangements required - I can access help from family, friends or others	40.03%	275
Yes, I will require in-home care services (respite)	29.40%	202
Yes, I will require out of home care services (respite)	16.89%	116
I am not sure	27.22%	187
Total Respondents: 687		

Note that percentages in the table above exceed 100% slightly as it can include information for more than one person receiving care and multiple selections depending on circumstances.

### What carers view as not a 'break'

Carers SA has received an incredible amount of detailed comments from carers. In these sections, carers let us know that when using the terms 'taking a break' or 'having time out', 'me-time' etc, carers have strong preferences for associated activity that are not related to their caring role, or skills development workshops.

Carers noted that although many are interested in skills development and workshops, carers often resent when these are contextually linked to 'having a break'.

## Transport to carer activities

It is encouraging that 88% of carers stated that they either have their own transport or can access the help of a family member or friend to drive them to any carer time out activity.

## Examples of carer voices

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*"This starts to affect your health both physically and mentally. It is draining but you can't give up. Like a train with no coal but steams still coming out. A break away will not be the cure but it will help!! It will provide respite and provide an opportunity to mend. It'll give a chance to allow me to say yes, I can do this! I want to see the sun tomorrow and enjoy it. My train has passengers very precious to me!! I need it to keep going!!!"*

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*"Having an organised activity, not focused on the caring role with others who are in the same situation will allow the opportunity to share ideas whilst giving the brain a rest from the daily frustrations. I feel this would be good for my wellbeing"*

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*"It would be wonderful to have contact with others that understand the struggle that carers have on a day to day basics. Connection with others is very important and at this present time is not happening."*

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*"A place that could be accessed be it in the city, suburbs or even rural that I can be alone or just have some time out."*

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*"A visit to relatives."*

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*"As an Aboriginal person, it would be wonderful to be given time to spend time on my land engaging with my culture and values."*

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*"A voucher for a scalp massage at a wellness centre. And perhaps a book or movie voucher. A hairdresser voucher."*

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*"[a break should] not be anything "work [caring role] related" - does any employee call 'attending a workshop for work related topics' a break?"*

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*"Anything carer [caring role] related should not be classed as time out but "work" related."*

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*"A break would have a positive impact, there are many times I feel I am drowning in the role as a carer and struggling to be the best I can, having time out for carers would allow me to relax and recharge my energy as well as allowing time to talk and vent to other carers.""*

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**Our special "Thank You" goes to the 701 carers who have taken part in this survey and who have shared their views and experiences so openly.**