

# Federal Budget 2022-23

## What it means for carers





# Introduction

The 2022-23 Federal Budget was delivered on 28 March 2022 with no dedicated new funding provided to address carers<sup>1</sup> specific needs.

Unpaid family and friend carers saved the Australian economy [\\$77.9 billion](#) in 2020. That was before COVID and the impacts on the community it brought with it. Yet these 2.65 million Australians were completely forgotten in the 2022-23 Federal Budget, which also did not outline long-term reform for carers or prepare for the [23% growth in demand](#) for primary carers by 2030.

Carers simply cannot continue to plug the gap in supports for someone who has a disability, chronic or life-limiting illness, is frail aged, has a mental illness, or alcohol or other drug related condition without better and ongoing supports for their own health, wellbeing and financial security.

The Carers Australia 2022-23 [Pre-Budget Submission](#) called for a range of measures to benefit carers. None of these were met:

- A Commissioner for carers and establishment of an Office for Carers within Government (\$12 million over 4 years).
- A National Carer Strategy endorsed by Australian Health Ministers (\$1.2 million over 2 years).
- A review of economic and financial security for carers by the Productivity Commission (\$5.2 million over 3 years).
- Investigation of the barriers to equitable access to respite care (\$2 million over 2 years).
- Support for the mental health and wellbeing needs of carers (\$8.1 million over three years).
- Independent individual advocacy for carers (\$25 million over three years).

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<sup>1</sup> Carers Australia uses the term 'carer' as defined by the [Commonwealth Carer Recognition Act 2010](#) (the Act), where it should not be used broadly and without context to describe a paid care worker, volunteer, foster carer or a family member or friend who is not a carer. The terms 'informal carer', 'unpaid carer' or 'family and friend carer' are also often used by organisations, government and the community to describe a carer. Carers Australia may use these terms to assist in providing context and to differentiate between other types of care provision.



## In the 2022 Federal Election who will care for carers?

Following the Federal Budget, Carers Australia is calling on all parties to demonstrate their commitment to Australia's 2.65 million carers in the lead-up to the Federal Election.

Lack of recognition of the caring role and its impact, not being identified by services they interact with, and not getting access to appropriate and timely respite care and support are critical structural factors to our health, aged care, mental health, disability care and social services systems.

We are calling for carers' needs to enter the centre of policy consideration and have outlined in our 2022 [Federal Election Platform](#) four initiatives to lay an evidence base that can be built upon for long-term reforms and a sustainable real change that will ultimately benefit individuals, families, communities and governments.

When the pandemic is over and this election is over many carers' lives will not change – they will continue to be socially isolated, financially disadvantaged and unrecognised unless there is action by community and governments.



## 2022-23 Federal Budget Analysis

Set out below is an overview of the 2022-23 Federal Budget measures that may affect carers. There may be other relevant measures that are not included in this overview and more detailed information can be found at [www.budget.gov.au](http://www.budget.gov.au).

Note that Budget measures must be passed by Parliament before they can come into effect.



# Mental Health

## What was in the Budget?

\$86.2 million over 5 years invested in prevention and early intervention, including continued support for digital mental health services in response to COVID-19 such as Lifeline's 13HELP Line, and increased demand for crisis support and suicide prevention, and several measures aimed at children, young people and schools.

\$34.9 million to ensure that all Australians have access to culturally appropriate mental health services, including targeted evidence-based mental health support to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and funding to establish the National Closing the Gap Policy Partnership on Social and Emotional Wellbeing (Mental Health).

\$24.3 million for people with eating disorders and their families, including specialised treatment services to be delivered in local community settings, funding for the National Eating Disorders Collaboration and Australia's first residential treatment centre for eating disorders in Queensland.

## Who does this affect?

People who need crisis mental health guidance and support, children and young adults at risk of developing or having developed mental ill health and their teachers, families and carers, and people living with an eating disorder and their families and carers.

Individuals and their carers from CALD communities will benefit from accessible and more targeted mental health services, access to translation services, and continued support for those who have experienced torture and trauma. Similarly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their carers will benefit from more culturally safe, sensitive and inclusive services.

## What does it mean for me as a carer?

While these measures will support certain carers by extension, none of the announced mental health and wellbeing funding is specifically aimed at the needs of carers or their own mental health and wellbeing.

Mental health services often focus on the needs of the person living with a mental illness or psychosocial disability without considering that the person providing care may also require mental health support, and in fact may also be a consumer of mental health services themselves.

The [2021 Carer Wellbeing Survey](#) found carers are 2.5 times more likely to have low wellbeing and much higher psychological distress compared to the average Australian. Lower wellbeing was more common amongst carers caring for a person living with a mental illness or psychosocial disability, their general health was also considerably lower and their experience of loneliness was higher – 44% of mental health carers reported feeling lonely “often” or “always”, compared to 35.1% of all carers and 11.1% of all Australians.



## Disability Support

### What was in the Budget?

There are no changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and very limited funding for disability support services beyond the NDIS.

\$1.2 million for the [Autism: What Next?](#) project to expand a digital toolkit that assists in navigation of the diagnostic process and available supports in the first year after diagnosis.

### Who does this affect?

People living with autism, their families and carers, where the first year after diagnosis can be particularly confusing and challenging.

### What does it mean for me as a carer?

There are no new supports for carers of people with disability other than autism.

For carers of children with autism there will be more resources available digitally to support the first year after diagnosis. The [2021 Carer Wellbeing Survey](#) found carers of children and adults with autism have low rates of wellbeing and higher rates of psychological distress compared to both other types of caring situations, and all Australians. Consideration needs to be given to how this new toolkit will interface with the Carer Gateway and Disability Gateway in providing supports, information and resources for parents and carers of children and adults with autism, and the NDIS more broadly.



## Social Security

### What was in the Budget?

A one-off payment of \$250 to assist six million Australians with the cost of living to be delivered progressively from late April 2022.

### Who does this affect?

Pensioners (including Carer Payment recipients), Youth Allowance and Jobseeker recipients, people on the Carer Allowance, Veterans' payments and holders of certain health concession cards. To qualify a person must be residing in Australia and receive or hold or have claimed or qualified for one of these on 29 March 2022.

### What does it mean for me as carer?

If you are receiving the Carer Payment or Carer Allowance you will receive this payment, as will the person you care for if they are on an eligible payment or hold a relevant health concession card. You will only receive one \$250 payment - for example, if you get both the Carer Payment and the Carer Allowance you will only get one payment.

301,197 people received the Carer Payment and 622,860 received Carer Allowance at [December 2021](#).



## Aged Care

### What was in the Budget?

Aged care was a major focus of last year's 2021-22 Federal Budget, with \$17.7 billion allocated to the Government's response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

This Budget restates those commitments and announces a further \$468.3 million for aged care services, including:

- \$345.7 million over four years to improve medication management and safety for aged care residents through on-site pharmacists and community pharmacy services.
- \$49.5 million from January 2023 for 15,000 more training courses for entry-level paid aged care workers and to enable existing paid aged care workers to upskill.
- \$6.9 million for a staged rollout of the national Cooperative and Mutual Enterprises (CME) Support Program to support workforce to develop.

An additional \$125 million extends the COVID-19 Aged Care Support Program.

### Who does this affect?

This will benefit people waiting for home care supports, people living in residential aged care who are taking multiple medications, and the paid aged care workforce but not necessarily carers in their caring role of older people.

### What does it mean for me as a carer?

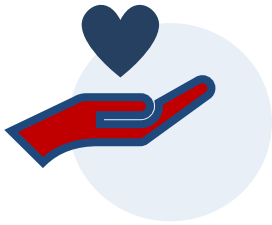
There were no aged care measures funded in the Budget that will directly benefit carers, however many carers of older Australians will welcome the workforce measures in the expectation of improved quality of care and continuity of relationships with paid aged care workers.

The [2021 Carer Wellbeing Survey](#) found that 47% carers of older people fear not being able to continue their caring role; only 56.5% are confident in organising access to services for the person; and, of those who accessed respite care, only 55.8% reported high level of satisfaction with the service provided.

Carers Australia acknowledges several aged care changes will commence in 2022-23 based on previously announced funding, including increased community respite care estimated to support an 8,400 additional people a year (from 1 July 2022), a new funding model for residential aged care with minimum standards for minutes of formal care provided, allocation of 40,000 additional Home Care Packages, and direct referral and information sharing for carers between My Aged Care, aged care assessment services and the Carer Gateway, including assistance with booking respite care following an aged care assessment from 1 July 2022.

For more information on previously announced reforms, what they mean for carers and the 2021-22 Budget, refer to Carers Australia's [Analysis of the Australia Government response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect](#).





# Dementia Care

## What was in the Budget?

\$24 million in grants to support research that improves the wellbeing of Australians living with dementia and their carers.

## Who does this affect?

Researchers who receive grants for projects focused on dementia. In the long-term, this research might lead to new person-centred care approaches, interventions that extend healthy, active years of life and earlier and more effective diagnosis of dementia.

## What does it mean for me as a carer?

There were no dementia care measures funded in the Budget that will directly benefit carers.

Carers and former carers of people living with dementia may be invited to participate in research through co-design, advisory groups or as research participants. The [Statement on Consumer and Community Involvement in Health and Medical Research](#) guides research institutions, researchers, consumers and community members in the active involvement of consumers and community members in all aspects of health and medical research. This must include carers.

The [2021 Carer Wellbeing Survey](#) found that carers of people living with dementia are more likely to “regularly” or “always” feel a sense of strain, with less than half of respondents reporting a high level of confidence in taking care of the emotional needs of the person they care for (45.3%) or cope with the stress of caregiving activities (31.1%).





## Employment & Training

### What was in the Budget?

Workforce Australia commences on 1 July 2022 as the new employment services model. In this Budget the Government will provide \$10.7 million to encourage and support employers and job seekers to engage with Workforce Australia, including through the new digital platform designed to become a single front door for all Government employment and skills programs and initiatives, and a refreshed and refocused network of providers to deliver tailored case management.

\$42.1 million over four years to deliver [ReBoot](#) from early 2023, a new pre-employment program to help an estimated 5,000 young people aged 15 to 24. The program will support disadvantaged Australians to overcome obstacles to find work.

\$6.1 million over two years from 2022-23 will be provided to continue development and raise awareness of The Field, an online platform being designed to directly connect people with disability with potential employers to increase employment outcomes for job seekers with disability.

Funding announced in this Budget continues to expand the [Mid-Career Checkpoint program](#) currently available in NSW, Victoria and QLD and expected to be rolled out nationally in 2023. The new funding will focus on supporting more women to take up digitally skilled roles and extending to existing workers in COVID-19 affected, female dominated industries where people are at risk of unemployment such as retail, hospitality, residential care services and childcare.

### Who does this affect?

Job seekers within the eligibility requirements of each initiative and those wanting to change careers or gain new skills in certain priority areas.

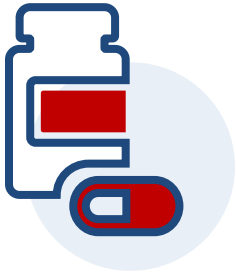
### What does it mean for me as carer?

The Mid-Career Checkpoint Program is specifically aimed at people who have been out of the workforce for six months or more while undertaking caring responsibilities and are looking to return to paid employment.

Regarding other initiatives, many carers themselves have disability or may be on an income support payment other than the Carer Payment, such as Jobseeker or Youth Allowance. Or they may be caring for someone on these payments or eligible for assistance to find employment. Initiatives may assist carers to find employment and/or meet their mutual obligation requirements for continued payments.

In 2020 before the impacts of COVID-19, it was [estimated](#) that 22% of primary carers were employed full-time in comparison to the Australian population average of 43%. Removing barriers and supporting carers to participate in secure, flexible and appropriate paid work is pivotal to enabling their social, community and economic participation, and greater outcomes for community and government as they maintain and thrive in their caring role.





## Access to Medicines

### What was in the Budget?

From 1 July 2022, the safety net thresholds for medicines listed under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schemes (PBS) will be reduced by \$81 for concession card holders and \$85 for general patients. As a result, people will reach the safety net with around 12 fewer scripts for concessional patients and two fewer scripts for general patients in a calendar year. If the safety net is reached, prescriptions for each medicine will be free for concession card holders (from \$6.80) and up to \$6.80 for general patients (from up to \$42.50 each) for the remainder of that calendar year.

\$2.4 billion for new and amended listings of some medicines which will reduce out-of-pocket costs for treatments, including for breast cancer, cystic fibrosis, severe eczema, asthma, HIV and heart failure.

### Who does this affect?

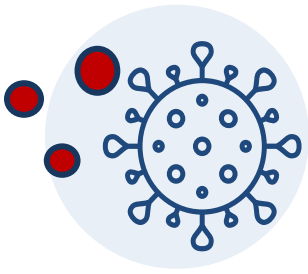
All Australians purchasing PBS listed medicines will benefit from the changes to the safety net if their expenditure exceeds the threshold. People with certain medical conditions will also benefit from new or amended medications on the PBS.

### What does it mean for me as carer?

If you or the person you are caring for takes multiple medicines, you will pay less for PBS medicines once you reach the safety net which may occur quicker with these changes. This will particularly benefit those who have a Pensioner Concession Card, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Health Care Card, Veteran Gold, Orange or White Card. You can also [combine your family's amounts](#) to reach the threshold sooner.

Carers play a key role in medication safety and management and may be collecting medicines and supplies, managing and monitoring repeat prescriptions, relaying and/or reinforcing information from a doctor and/or pharmacist about medicines, keeping a medicines list, assisting with taking medicines, storage and safety including disposal, watching for side effects or adverse events, and watching for when the medicine may not be working as well, for example, breakthrough pain.

Carers are part of the health care team, and it is essential that prescribers and dispensers of medicines work with carers to ensure they understand and are included in discussions about the medicines of the person they care for.



## Response to COVID-19

### What was in the Budget?

\$4.2 billion to extend the pandemic health response including:

- \$690.4 million to continue the COVID-19 vaccination program to the end of 2022 which will also support the continued administration of booster doses.
- \$546.0 million for Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items to conduct PCR tests.
- \$1.6 billion to ensure equitable access to Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs), particularly for residential aged care facilities, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and Supported Independent Living residential disability care.
- \$15.0 million communication campaign encouraging post-COVID health checks and to inform about the availability of telehealth, electronic prescriptions, and online mental health services.

The Government also previously announced that it will extend the COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Testing Concessional Access Program to enable concession card holders to access an additional 10 RATs from participating community pharmacies until 31 July 2022.

### Who does this affect?

All Australians have been, and continue to be, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding will allow governments to continue responding to COVID-19, to limit the spread of the disease and monitor transmission in the community.

### What does it mean for me as a carer?

No specific funding was provided to address carers' needs related to COVID-19.

Adding to the psychological distress during COVID-19, carers were providing more care, including more complex care as access to paid services reduced. For many carers, this exacerbated the social isolation and poorer health and wellbeing they may have already been experiencing, and additional impacts on employment. Difficulty getting the vaccine for the person(s) they care for (who were more likely to be vulnerable), let alone themselves and ongoing confusion in messaging continues to be a barrier for carers who have specific information needs that continue to be overlooked.



## Conclusion

The 2022-23 Federal Budget was a disappointment for carers. It was a missed opportunity to ensure carers' essential contribution to the Australian economy was recognised, their caring burden eased, and Australia's health, aged care, mental health, disability support, social services and employment, training and education infrastructure better meets the needs of Australia's 2.65 million carers.

## About Carers Australia

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing the diversity of the 2.65 million Australians who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends with a disability, chronic condition, mental illness or disorder, alcohol or other drug related condition, terminal illness, or who are frail aged.

In collaboration with our members, the peak carer organisations in each state and territory, we collectively form the National Carer Network and are an established infrastructure that represent the views of carers at the national level.

Our vision is an Australia that values and supports all carers, where all carers should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family, social and community life, employment and education.

Disclaimer: This document has been developed to provide basic information about the main 2022-23 Federal Budget measures in relation to carers. It is not possible to cover every measure that may apply to carers and their individual circumstances.

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