

22nd March 2023

Carers SA Submission

Southern Eyre Peninsula Public Health Plan 2023-2028

About Carers SA

Carers SA is the main organisation representing the needs and interests of Carers in South Australia and provides a range of services for Carers across the state, including the services of the Carer Gateway. Carers SA is part of a National Network of Carers Associations and a member of Carers Australia as well as a member of the Carer Support Network of South Australia.

Carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a 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.

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. Caring however often comes at a cost to Carers with severe **health and wellbeing consequences**¹ for Carers as well as the caring role impacting **lifelong financial insecurity**².

Facts & Figures:

- There are 2.7 million unpaid Carers in Australia. More than 856,000 Carers are primary Carers.
- South Australia's Carer numbers are estimated at 245,000 and nearly 30,000 Young Carers 24 years or younger.
- Across the **Eyre Peninsula Region (EP)**³, **5,853 Carers** were providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long term illness or old age in 2021. This represents 12.6% of the population aged 15 years and over.

¹ See Report - 2022 Carer Wellbeing Survey, Available via:
https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-CWS-Full-Report_221010_FINAL.pdf

² See Report Carers SA – Caring Cost Us, available via
<https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/caring-costs-us>

³ See <https://profile.id.com.au>

- According to Carers living on EP- data extracted from the National Carer Survey 2022,
 - about 1 in 5 Carers reported experiencing severe financial stress over the last 12 months
 - 57.6% of Carers reported feeling socially isolated, (16.9% ‘socially isolated’ plus 40.7% ‘highly isolated’)
 - Only 20% of Carers agree that their caring role is recognised by governments.
- The need for assistance (care) across the region has increased steadily. Aging population care needs were expected. However, there was also a particular sharp increase (55%) between 2016 (n113) and 2021 (n176) in children aged 5-9 year diagnosed with a disability.
- Within the EP region’s Aboriginal Community⁴,
 - 15% care for a person with disability or is frail due to age.
 - 29% are involved in the provision of care for a child/children
 - The region has an exceptionally high population of children aged between 6-15 years old who are 25% of the Aboriginal population. This is above the State or National percentage average for Aboriginal children of that age.
- 2022 National Carer Survey (unpublished data calculations, based on the South Australian data set) Carers living on the EP experience significantly higher stress levels (high to very high stress = **54.2%**) than other Carers in SA (**47.2%**). That of course impacts on a Carers health / mental health / capacity to do well in their caring role and should therefore receive consideration in the Public Health Plan 2023-2038.

Carers SA is listening to Carers. We obtain input from Carers through direct conversations, qualitative research, surveys, forums and round table discussions. The content of this submission is based on our direct work with Carers, feedback from Carers and our involvement with the sector as well as our work on Advisory Committee and working groups. **This submission will provide you with direct access to the actual experiences and voices of Carers**

Carers SA also conveys the voice of Carers to decision makers. Carers SA partnered with SA Health on the development of the SA Health’s Partnering with Carers Policy⁵ and the initial Strategic Plan and Directive followed by supporting its implementation.

The key items in the Policy include:

- early identification and recognition
- Carers are engaged as partners in care
- Carers provide comments and feedback
- Carer friendly workplace
- celebrate Carers during National Carers Week
- staff education and training.

⁴ See Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Eyre Peninsula, Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/ILOC40300201>

⁵ Available via SA Health Website here: [Carers - partnering with you | SA Health](#)

Many of the following recommendations will benefit the wellbeing of the wider **community** as well as Carers, some are specific to assure the Recognition of Carers in accordance with the **South Australian Carers Recognition Act 2005 and its incorporated SA Carers Charter**⁶.

Inclusive Council Policies and Practices

We believe that that the Health System's key Carer policy items in principle also apply within the context of the important work that Councils perform for their communities.

As Carers provide a vital service in maintaining health and wellbeing within family and community, Carers SA recommends that the Councils of the Southern Eyre Peninsula adopt key policies that better support the Recognition of Carers as follows:

Recommendation 1:

As Carers play a vital part in maintaining health and wellbeing within family and community, Carers SA recommends that the Councils of the Southern Eyre Peninsula adopt key policies that support better recognition of Carers as follows:

- *Establish or review policies that allow for early identification and recognition of Carers who access Council services*
- *Engage with Carers as Partners in strategies stated in the Southern Eyre Peninsula Public Health Plan 2023-2028*
- *Include Carers as a specific population group in Councils' community consultations and advisory groups.*
- *Identify Council (and associated entities) staff and volunteers who have a caring role and ensure workplace practices and culture are Carer friendly*
- *Provide staff and volunteers with education / training to raise Awareness of Carers.*
- *Celebrate Carers during National Carers Week.*

Social and Community Isolation / Transport

Feeling part of a community and a strong social structure is a key component of overall community wellbeing.

As mentioned previously, 57.6% of Carers living on the Eyre Peninsula experience isolation. Isolation in this context does not necessarily refer to remote locations but it is the type of social isolation people feel when they do not feel part of the community around them.

Councils play an important role in combatting this kind of isolation often at the planning stage of new developments or redevelopment projects. Councils have an opportunity to influence the type of community friendly and healthy community environment they wish to provide for their citizens right at the design approval stage.

⁶ SA Carers Recognition Act information and download via: [SA.GOV.AU - Carers' rights and legislation \(www.sa.gov.au\)](https://www.sa.gov.au/legislation)

As a society, we have learned that sprawling housing-only subdivisions are detrimental to the development of healthy community living and population resilience.

Councils can counter balance the trend by ensuring that expanding cities and town planning decision makers take key concepts of liveability as central to their design. This does not only apply to Carers, but to the wider community as well. Accessing basic supplies, schools and open areas that are suitable for community to access services, to gather and share activities should be built into regional centre and town planning designs.

Transport is an issue for the wider community and especially those who cannot easily address their transport needs on their own. For example, transport has been recently identified by the National Seniors Australia's 'Older Australians and Community Survey 2023'⁷ as a key issue that senior citizens wish to be addressed by their Councils.

Carers have listed transport and cost of transport issues as one of the key concerns in their daily life. In the Carers SA regional Transport and Care survey⁸ 67% of the participating Carers reported that they have missed out on important appointments or events due to transport issues.

Only 18% stated that transport was not an issue.

Transport becomes an even more poignant issue, when not a lot of daily supply or services can be reached without the use of a car, or even require the purchase and maintain a second car in the family. It puts tremendous pressure on already tight Carer family budgets. When the ability to access supplies, getting to medical or other appointments, or taking part in social and community activities causes regular concerns or may not even be possible at times due to a lack of available transport, it becomes clear that this negatively influences social participation and community cohesion and ultimately community wellbeing.

Recommendation 2: - Combatting Isolation & Transport Issues

- Ensure future town planning projects are in line with concepts that support the development of liveable, healthy and resilient communities

- Consider introducing or expand on existing affordable community and other transport options for easier access for citizens to key services within a community.

- Assure that service locations, community activities and events planning include equitable access and inclusion consideration.

Services and Resources

Councils as 'Central Resource & Healthy Communities Innovators'

Our world has become extremely information intensive across many offline and online platforms and systems.

In principle, Carers report to us that it is very difficult to know what information or supports are available, where to start a search and what exactly to ask for. It is of course

⁷ National Seniors Australia March 2023 Survey Report available here:

<https://nationalseniors.com.au/uploads/2023-NSA-Community-change-wishlist-two-up.pdf>

⁸ Carers SA – Transport and Care Survey report 2018, available here:

<https://www.carerssa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Carers-SA-Transport-and-Care-Survey-2018-Report.pdf>

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even harder for those Carers and members of the community who for various reasons are not accessing the Internet, or only do so infrequently.

Councils, local libraries and community centres have become important distributors of locally relevant information. However, there is room for further expansion of this important service.

We recommend that the range of information and important links provided about available concessions and services to citizens is extended from its current level and regularly updated. A collaborative effort to design and update a joint approach to such a resource across all three council would benefit the entire population including Carers across the Southern Eyre Peninsula.

Carers are telling us of the substantial negative health and wellbeing impact they are experiencing due to a lack of health and allied health professional and related services operating across the area.

This is an issue that is repeated across the state and nationally and will require long-term cross jurisdiction planning and long-term interventions.

However, this raises potential opportunities for cross Council innovation and

Recommendations 3 – Councils as Central Resource

- Councils develop a joint listing of services and resources for citizens including Carers which list local as well as cross-Councils information and supports communities can access

- Councils take the lead to collaborate with Local Health Networks and others to investigate the feasibility of the provision of a culturally competent ‘roving specialist and allied health team’

collaboration to attract health and allied health service providers to the area permanently or on a regular visiting / mobile basis. A solution may be to encourage and incentivise ‘roving’ specialists across the region. We encourage Councils take the lead to collaborate with Local Health Networks and others to investigate the feasibility of the provision of a culturally competent ‘*health team on wheels*’. Carers reported that especially mental health and paediatric health professionals are particularly needed.

Councils as Healthy Community Capacity Builders

It is important to assure that community centres and councils are culturally friendly places with staff and volunteers that often act as a ‘first sign post’ for community needing to address information, support, health and wellbeing needs.

We also know from our collaborations with the health sector and feedback from Carers, that health literacy and other general healthy life skills training or wellbeing related workshop events are of particular community and health sector interest.

Councils play an important role in the provision of community education and could continue to further expand skills training (for example health literacy training),

interest workshop and event offerings that support the envisaged outcomes stated in the EP Public Health Plan.

It is of particular importance to Carers to assure that such capacity and resilience building events and workshop are facilitated in a culturally sensitive and inclusive way and accessible for people with disability. Ideally, planning considerations would include potential day options for children and adults with disability, those who are ageing and are accessible for people with mobility restrictions.

Recommendations 4 – Councils as Community Capacity Builders

Councils extend their current community education and information activities to further align content and accessibility to the EP Public Health Plan’s intended outcomes.

Voices of Carers living in the three Southern EP Councils’ areas

Below are some examples of what EP Carers have told us about what is causing them high stress and impacting on their own and family wellbeing. Please note that names have been altered other details were de-identified to protect the privacy of Carers and their families:

- *We have arranged counselling services this year [to help us cope], but here is a 2 months waiting list.*
- *I was as just seen as the child, not even considered as a Carer. Frustrating. [Young Carer about a local health service]*
- *The service [we could get] was good. But No one can help me with finding registered, trained support workers in this area to give me a break.*
- *There are limited or no local services (regional South Australia) and not even any online services.*
- *My [child] is 12 years old, there are no inclusive sporting activities; limited support workers who are experienced, available and suitable for my child’s [disability related] needs.*
- *There are not enough Allied Health services for my child - particularly for his behaviour support needs (PBSP; Psychology) but also Occupational Therapy and Speech Pathology.*
- *LegalAid services won’t touch most of the things we needed help with, they just refer you on. Actual lawyer services are way out of reach in \$\$\$. And no one else gives a crap.*
- *People ... living in regional and small country towns who do not drive, face severe barriers to accessing appointments, employment and volunteer opportunities, and community events due to lack of transport options.*

Contact:

Marianne Lewis

Manager Strategic Policy

Carers SA

E: marianne.lewis@carerssa.com.au

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