

About Carers SA

Carers SA is the peak advocacy body for Carers in South Australia. Raising the voice of Carers, recognition of Carers, their rights, wellbeing and needs is at the heart of Carers SA's efforts. We persistently advocate across governments, health and social services and systems, business and communities to prioritise appropriate and meaningful support and services for Carers.

Carers SA aims to ensure that Carers needs, wishes, values and perspectives are elevated and able to inform and influence decision-making by government, service providers, policy makers, legislators and systems and services to improve the lives and wellbeing of Carers in South Australia.

Carers SA is both the advocacy peak body and the lead Carer Gateway provider in South Australia. We receive funding from state and federal governments to provide Carer services. This provides us with a unique opportunity to understand the needs of Carers and identify and implement ways to improve the services they need and use. It enables us to engage with many and diverse Carers across South Australia through our broad networks and through services and supports and in so doing, positions Carers SA to raise awareness of issues facing Carers and raise the voice of Carers to inform and influence policy and decision-making about things that impact them.

Our Advocacy Aims

Our advocacy aims to enable Carers to:

- Have their voices heard on issues that are important to them.
- Defend and safeguard their rights.
- Be partner in decision-making that impacts them and the people they care for.
- Contribute to shared planning and problem solving to improve the lives of carers.

Principles that govern our Advocacy

Our advocacy is guided by the following principles

- **Values based:** Our values of inclusivity, empathy, integrity, professional excellence, collaboration, inform how we engage with Carers in advocacy.
- **Carer-centred:** the needs, wants, values and perspectives of Carers drives and directs our work.

- **Access and equity:** We work to ensure and promote services that meet the needs and are accessible to Carers including services that do not create financial barriers to access.
- **Empowering self-advocacy:** Our work supports Carers to be empowered and advocate for themselves. We work with Carers to identify the services they need and want.
- **Partnering with Carers:** We collaborate with Carers to ensure our advocacy work is informed and influenced by Carers lived experience. We engage with Carers to inform our advocacy practices, policy priorities, services and in how we respond to government, funders and other policy makers.
- **Carer Literacy:** We provide clear and purposeful information in a way that is accessible to Carers to understand their rights and support them to navigate services and supports to meet their needs.
- **Supporting Advocates:** We support Carers and Carer Advocates through identifying and creating opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and experience to advocate for themselves and others.
- **Safeguarding:** We have clear policies and practices for safeguarding Carers and identifying and responding to risk, human rights issues and unmet need.
- **Building capacity:** We work collaboratively with other service providers within and across sectors to identify shared goals to create shared advocacy policy for impact.

Our Priorities for Advocacy

We prioritise our advocacy strategies where issues

- Are identified as of priority, need or special interest by Carers,
- Are a risk or threat to the rights, safety and wellbeing of Carers,
- Are an emerging concern for Carers,
- Directly impact Carers in South Australia,
- Are of national and/or cross jurisdictional concern and priority and should be considered in conjunction with Carers Australia and other National Carer Network organisations.

How we Advocate

The way we advocate embeds elements of social advocacy. We take positive and ethical action; we build the capacity of individuals to self-advocate and we advocate on their behalf to assist them in raising their own voice; we build the capacity of the sector to improve the services they provide; we are consistent over time, we are independent of government and have no political affiliation; we actively identify actual and potential conflicts of interest to ensure we remain transparent and accountable; we focus on the fundamental needs, rights and interests of Carers, we advocate with effort, energy and enthusiasm and we actively collaborate and partner with Carers and other stakeholders to improve the lives of Carers.

Carers SA uses key strategies for successful and informed advocacy

- We develop Carer Policy informed by Carers.
- We engage Carers in continuous feedback via:
 - Carers SA Carer surveys and feedback mechanisms,
 - Carer forums, focus groups and round table discussions,
 - Carer SA, Carer Advisory Groups including our Carers Advisory Committee, First Nations Panel, CALD Carer Panel, and the Young Carer Collective,
 - Facilitation of the *National Carer Survey* and *Carer Wellbeing Survey*
 - Carer comments, complaints, compliments and ideas.
- We meet with Ministers, Advisors and other decision-makers to keep them informed of priorities, issues and concerns that directly impact Carers.
- We collect, monitor and analyse data relating to Carers including Carer and Service reported outcome measures, research and best practice, unmet need and services gaps, innovations and emerging trends and practices, to inform our evidence base for advocacy.
- We respond to calls for submissions from governments, regulators, complaints bodies and other peaks on issues impacting Carers.
- We actively seek input and gather feedback from Carers on draft government policy and legislation to deliver Carer informed responses and submissions.
- We monitor state, national and international policy, standards and frameworks, research, legislation and emerging issues and initiatives to inform our advocacy and policy.
- We partner with researchers to improve Carer informed research, increase Carer focussed research and assist in enabling researchers to engage with Carers as participants, advisors and co-researchers.
- We train Carer Advocates to actively and effectively participate in sharing their unique perspective through their experience of the needs, goals and expectation of Carers and support, promote and defend the interests of Carers.
- We convene and chair the Carer Support Network of South Australia (CSNSA). The Network's purpose is to identify and advocate for the needs and issues of South Australian Carers, through advice to Carers SA and collaborative action by its members.
- We work to build the capacity of the Carer sector in South Australia to support person centred service delivery to meet the needs of and improve outcomes for Carers.
- We contribute to national policy and advocacy as member of the National Policy Advisory Group led by Carers Australia to Advocate on issues of national impact.
- We implement advocacy strategies and initiatives consistent with *Carers SA Strategic Directions*, *The National Carer Strategy* and *Carers Recognition Acts* (state and federal)

Our Advocacy Directions

Carers SA, in listening to Carers in South Australia, prioritise the following key future advocacy directions

- Build awareness of the unique needs of Young Carers.
- Focus on supporting Carers literacy to navigate service systems, for the people they care for and for themselves.
- Training and skills building for Carers including related to their caring role.
- Developing outcomes-based measures to inform service and advocacy impact for Carers.
- Building carer recognition of other service sectors to recognise the intersectionality of Carers and proactively support the needs of Carers.
- Supporting Carers rights including their right to make a complaint.
- Supporting Carers legal rights and access to affordable legal services.

We do this with a focus on Carers with a high need for support services, that may include both the needs of the person they care for and the Carers own support needs. These include but are not limited to Carers and/or the person/s they care for:

- With lived experience of mental illness including psychosocial distress
- Living with disability
- Living with dementia
- Who experience racism, stigma and marginalisation including LGBTIQ+ individuals and groups, First Nations Peoples and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Using alcohol and other drugs
- With complex and/or chronic health conditions
- In palliative care and end of life care
- Older people
- Young people
- With intersectional support needs
- Veterans and defence personnel
- Who experience isolation
- Who experience socio-economic disadvantage

Related Documents

- Carers SA Strategic Plan 2024 - 2026
- [National Carers Strategy 2024-2034 and Action Plan 2024-2027](#)
- [Carers Recognition Act](#) (South Australia)
- [Australian Carers Recognition Act](#)
- [SA Carers Charter](#) (South Australia)
- [Charter of Health and Community Services Rights](#) (South Australia)