

2020

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

STATEMENT

ACT Carers Strategy Action Plan – Progress Report 2020

**Presented by
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Minister for Community Services and Facilities**

This progress report recognises our commitment to supporting carers in the ACT community, through the ongoing work of this Government alongside our community partners.

The report outlines progress made on the first three-year Action Plan under the ACT Carers Strategy. The Action Plan is made up of 25 actions, which are being progressed by 12 lead agencies and 20 support agencies from across Government and the community sector.

The Carers Strategy Governance Group continues to oversee this substantial program of work. The Governance Group comprises members from Government, the community sector and the ACT carer community. Our carer members have contributed to the development of the Strategy and Action Plan from the outset, and continue to provide diverse perspectives and expertise through their lived experience of what it means to be a carer. This ten-year Strategy is a strong example of how the Government continues to work closely with the community to develop and deliver meaningful community-led outcomes.

Carers make a vital contribution to the fabric of our Canberra community. In the ACT, approximately 50,000 carers provide unpaid care to family members, friends or neighbours who are living with disability, a physical or mental health condition, or are frail aged. Some provide care to children and young people who are unable to live with their families.

The progress report highlights the significant work the ACT Government and community organisations are doing to recognise and support carers, respond to their needs, and provide opportunities for carers to participate in the community.

Progress against actions has already achieved tangible outcomes for carers in the ACT. This progress can be seen across the five themes of the action plan: services and supports for carers; recognition and awareness; inclusion; workforce and skills recognition; and support for young carers.

In April 2020, Carers ACT rolled out implementation of the new Carer Gateway services. This suite of services includes peer support groups and coaching, as well as counselling, carer support action plans, supports for carer wellbeing and provision of information.

Carers ACT, the Health Care Consumers Association and the Mental Health Consumers Network have also developed a consumer and carer representative training package for delivery by Canberra Health Services. The training package will build skills and confidence in carers to undertake representative roles, to ensure the voices of carers are heard in a range of Canberra Health Services committees.

Through its role as a lead agency under the Action Plan, the ACT Education Directorate is now providing resources to all ACT public schools to assist staff to identify and support young carers. This includes an information sheet about supporting students who are young carers, which links to a good practice guide for working with young carers in schools and a teacher's guide on young carers.

Progress under the Action Plan has provided a range of opportunities for carers to be included in the work of governance and advisory bodies. Carers are now represented on the ACT Disability Reference Group, the Carers Strategy Governance Group, the 'Our Care' Committee and the Partnering with

Consumer Standard Committee. Carers ACT was also included on the panel for the 2019 Disability Inclusion Grants.

The CIT Skills for Carers program offers carers an opportunity to access short courses to support them and the people they care for. Carers studying other CIT training courses can also access support services and receive advice on flexible study options.

The ACT Carers Strategy is not only improving support and recognition for carers in the ACT, but is also having a positive effect in other jurisdictions. Carers ACT has partnered with Carers NSW and other members of the National Network of Carer Associations to develop and implement the Carers + Employers website, resources and accreditation program. The accreditation program aims to encourage workplaces to implement best practice approaches to supporting staff who have caring responsibilities.

The COVID-19 public health emergency has had an enormous impact on the ACT community in many ways – including carers, who have continued in their vital caring role despite changes to the way in which services are delivered.

To support and acknowledge carers during this time, Carers ACT and the ACT Government have partnered to distribute 5,000 carer recognition packs to raise awareness of the role and contribution of carers. These packs include information about the important role of carers and how we can all take steps to better support carers in our community. Raising awareness is critical to ensuring carers have their voices heard and can access the supports they need.

I want to thank the carers in the ACT community, who have worked tirelessly to provide continued care, often at the expense of their own health, wellbeing and finances through the public health emergency. Your role is one that often takes place quietly and steadily behind the scenes, despite any challenges that may emerge. We all benefit from your dedication and commitment to supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

I also want to thank Carers ACT for their leadership and continued advocacy for carers during these challenging times. Throughout the COVID-19 emergency, Carers ACT has embraced opportunities to support carers in new ways and progress actions under the ACT Carers Strategy Action Plan.

Through the Strategy, the ACT Government will continue to work with our community partners to support and recognise the efforts of carers in the ACT, providing opportunities for carers to participate fully in all areas of life.

ENDS