



**Carers Tasmania Response to the  
Our Healthcare Future Issues Paper  
Establishing a Statewide Clinical Senate for Tasmania**

**November 2021**

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## 1. Background

Carers Tasmania is the Peak Body representing informal carers in Tasmania. A carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to family members or friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic or life limiting condition, alcohol or drug dependence or who are frail and aged.<sup>1</sup>

Carers Tasmania acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the land of Lutruwita/Tasmania and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge and support people of all genders, sexualities, cultural beliefs, and abilities and understand that carers in Tasmania, whilst sharing a common theme of caring for a family member or friend are diverse individuals with varying beliefs, experiences, and identities.

As well as representing carers through the Peak Body activities, Carers Tasmania also supports carers living in Tasmania in their caring journeys through its service delivery arm of Care2Serve. Care2Serve is funded under the Commonwealth National Carer Gateway program and provides a range of services and supports for family carers which are designed to build resilience, increase wellbeing, improve quality of life, and sustain carers to effectively continue their caring roles. The available supports include the provision of information, advice and referrals, holistic identification of carer strengths and needs through a carer support planning process, the provision of professional, therapeutic counselling, peer support and coaching to support carers in achieving specific goals.

Care2Serve also have capacity to fund certain types of planned, practical support services such as, but not limited to in home respite, personal care, domestic assistance, and meal preparation. Care2Serve may also fund various items such as laptops to assist carers who are studying or trying to enter the workforce. Furthermore, Care2Serve also coordinate the provision of emergency support during instances where a carer may be unable to provide the care that they usually do, resulting from unexpected illness or injury for the carer.

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<sup>1</sup> I-Care – A Resource for Family and Friends Supporting Someone in Hospital (2019) I-CareBook-2019.pdf (carerstas.org)

## 2. Introduction

Carers Tasmania are pleased to provide feedback into the *Our Healthcare Future Issues Paper – Establishing a Clinical Senate for Tasmania*,<sup>2</sup> which builds on the *Our Healthcare Future – Immediate Actions and Consultation Paper*.<sup>3</sup> We agree with the challenges highlighted in the *Immediate Actions and Consultation Paper* and welcome the commitment and actions towards the key focus areas of:

- Improvement Area 1: Better Community Care;
- Improvement Area 2: Modernising Tasmania's Health System; and
- Improvement Area 3: Planning for the future.

The *Establishing a Clinical Senate for Tasmania Paper* emphasises clinical and consumer engagement as a vital step towards achieving appropriate service planning throughout the reform to enable an effective and sustainable health system. We have taken particular focus on two of the questions in the paper, such as:

- What is the scope and purpose of a statewide clinical senate for Tasmania? and
- What is the right balance of consumer and clinical representation?

We recognise that the consumer voice of lived experience experts can play a critical role in the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of clinical and health services, however we recommend that the term 'consumer' is broadened further to recognise and include carers. Carers play a fundamental role in supporting the consumers of health and clinical services. With consultation for Carer Recognition legislation currently be undertaken in Tasmania,<sup>4</sup> the reform offers a fitting opportunity to take the lead in recognising the important contributions that carers make to the people they care for and the knowledge and experience they could offer the wider community, particularly in the context of the healthcare system.

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<sup>2</sup> Tasmanian Government Department of Health (2020). Immediate Actions and Consultation Paper. [https://www.health.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/416845/Our\\_Healthcare\\_Future\\_IAaCP\\_vf\\_21\\_Dec20.pdf](https://www.health.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/416845/Our_Healthcare_Future_IAaCP_vf_21_Dec20.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Tasmanian Government Department of Health (2021). Establishing a Statewide Clinical Senate for Tasmania. [https://www.health.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/441145/Issues-Paper\\_Clinical\\_Senates\\_FINAL\\_Sept2021.pdf](https://www.health.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/441145/Issues-Paper_Clinical_Senates_FINAL_Sept2021.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Tasmanian Government Department of Communities (2021). Carer Recognition Legislation Consultation. [https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/csr/policy/Policy\\_Work/carers\\_policy\\_and\\_action\\_plan/carers-recognition-legislation-consultation](https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/csr/policy/Policy_Work/carers_policy_and_action_plan/carers-recognition-legislation-consultation)

### **3. What is the scope and purpose of a statewide Clinical Senate for Tasmania?**

We are hopeful that the main purposes of a Clinical Senate will be to enable a strategic, facilitated process to provide recommendations and decisions about clinical services that are in the best interests of the whole community and improve patient experience and outcomes. This would be best achieved by seeking input from a broad range of clinicians from a variety of professional disciplines as well as people who have experienced accessing clinical services, either as a patient or as a carer of a patient. The Senate should focus on the quality of the provision of healthcare services, increasing patient safety, and the identification and exploration any issues with an aim for continuous improvement, particularly through any reform processes. This could be achieved by the Clinical Senate utilising the experience and knowledge of its members to enable the improved delivery of health services through members partaking in discussion to evaluate and debate experience and evidence-based approaches and proposed future processes. We are hopeful that the Clinical Senate will actively engage with consumers, carers, and other relevant sector members in Tasmania.

### **4. What is the right balance of clinician and consumer representation?**

We recommend that a proportion of the consumer representation in the proposed Clinical Senate be filled by the carers of the consumers who are accessing or have accessed clinical services in Tasmania. Furthermore, we recommend that the representation group term be broadened to include carers, and that the members be named up as clinical, consumer, and carer representatives.

Carers offer valuable supports to the people they care for such as practical supports like prompting or assisting with personal care, cooking, cleaning, organising, and managing medication, assisting the person they care for to and from health, clinical or other appointments, understanding and interpreting health information and assisting with health decisions. The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018 Survey of Disability, Aging and Carers reported that there were 80,100 carers in Tasmania, which is representative of 15.5% of the Tasmanian population.<sup>5</sup>

Through facilitating state-wide consultations for the Tasmanian Carer Action Plan in 2020, Carers Tasmania found that carers frequently reported feeling invisible within the Tasmanian health system, despite the crucial role that they play in supporting and sustaining the wellbeing of the people they provide care for.<sup>6</sup> We recommend that the health system in Tasmania takes a proactive approach towards recognising and valuing, respecting, and supporting the important role that carers play in

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<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 44300DO006\_2018 Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Tasmania, 2018. Released at 11:30am Wednesday 5 February 2020

<sup>6</sup> Carers Tasmania (2021). Carers Tasmania Submission to the Tasmanian Carer Action Plan 2021-2024.

assisting the health, wellbeing, treatments, and recovery of the people they care for. The inclusion of carer representatives as part of a statewide Clinical Senate would be a positive step forward in facilitating this inclusive approach.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, Carers Tasmania support the idea of introducing a statewide Clinical Senate in Tasmania, as part of the Our Healthcare Futures Reforms which aims to consult, develop, and build well-integrated and sustainable health services in Tasmania. We strongly recommend that alongside clinicians and consumers, carers should be recognised and included as an integral part of the Clinical Senate membership team. Carers Tasmania seeks the inclusion of carers throughout future health reforms and associated projects in Tasmania.