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Executive Summary

Carers provide care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail. Carers are not formally paid to undertake their caring roles, they receive no holiday benefits or sick leave allowance. They care for someone out of love, dedication and concern, and often because they have no choice.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers in Australia identified that there were 73,800 Carers in Tasmania. Carers make an enormous contribution to the economy - the annual 'replacement value' of informal care in Australia has been calculated at in excess of \$40 billion (Access Economics and Carers Australia, 2010).

Carers Tasmania acknowledges that the Federal Government is keen to improve the employment prospects of Carers, and in doing so would potentially have benefits to both the economy and Carers. Supporting Carers to continue to engage or re-engage with the paid workforce, or to study and undertake voluntary work, has the potential to enhance Carers' quality of life. Many Carers want to work but at the same time it must be recognised that no single caring situation is the same, and flexibility for 'return to work' initiatives will be required.

In order to be active members of the paid workforce, Carers need support to re-engage and remain engaged with the workforce, as well as support for the person they care for. If unemployed Carers are to return to work, they will need access to quality services to 'take on' the caring roles that they currently play.

Carers Tasmania presents following recommendations in this submission:

- 1. That the Government fund Carers Tasmania (\$90,000) to develop and implement a Carer-Friendly Workplace Program in Tasmania which will:***
 - Develop an accreditation system for employers to become publically recognised as Carer-Friendly Workplaces.***
 - Develop and deliver Carer-Friendly Workplace training for government, non-government and private sector employers and their employees.***
 - Support employers to adopt and implement a Work and Carer Charter (based on that which is ideally included in a Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act)***
 - Investigate and establish a partnership with an organisation to specifically assist Carers to become workforce-ready, e.g. assisting Carers to prepare resumes, developing interview skills with Carers, providing job seeker support to Carers etc.***
- 2. That the Government develop a Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act, which incorporates a Carer Charter**.***

***** The Charter in particular is parallel to the outcomes and recommendations identified in recommendation 1***

1.0 Introduction

Carers Tasmania is pleased to present this submission to the Tasmanian Government in lieu of preparing of the 2015-16 State Budget.

Carers provide care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail. Carers are not paid to undertake their caring roles. They do so out of love, dedication and concern, and often because they have no choice. The caring role ranges from providing personal care such as assistance with dressing and showering, to helping a loved one with mobility or communication, to behaviour management, emotional support, supervision, or assistance with accessing appropriate health care services.

The 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers in Australia identified that there were 73,800 Carers in Tasmania.¹

In this submission, Carers Tasmania will bring to the attention of the Tasmanian Government three recommendations that should be considered as part of the 2015-16 State Budget development process.

A Carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition or terminal illness, and those who



¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2014, 4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, Tasmania, 2012, Table 33.1.

2.0 About Carers Tasmania

Carers Tasmania is a non-profit, community-based, incorporated association and registered charity dedicated to improving the quality of life of all caring families living in Tasmania.

Carers Tasmania is committed to consulting with Carers to identify and respond to their needs. Carers Tasmania provides a diverse range of services across all areas of the State, including information, advice and referral, education and training, emotional support via counselling (both individual and therapeutic groups), health and wellbeing activities, and social support.

Carers Tasmania is governed by a skills-based volunteer Board of directors which oversees the strategic, financial and legal direction of the organisation. As a skills-based Board, members contribute significant professional expertise and some are also able to offer perspectives drawn from their own Carer experiences.

The key objectives of the organisation are to:

- Provide quality Carer-focused services
- Encourage awareness and community support for Carers
- Systemic representation on behalf of Carers to government and other stakeholders about identified Carer concerns and options for solutions
- Operate a progressive, sustainable, accountable and transparent organisation
- Be recognised as a leader in the provision of support to Carers.



3.0 About our consultation method

Carers Tasmania recognises the value and contributions of Carers. We place the voices of Carers at the centre of our work and are committed to listening to the stories of Carers across Tasmania. That's why we've established *Conversations with Carers*.

Conversations with Carers was developed as a means of recognising and capturing the views, perspectives and lived experiences of Carers in Tasmania. It helps develop a better understanding of the issues faced by Carers so that we can undertake advocacy on behalf of Carers, and also provides a recognised program that enables Carers to have input into policy and service development.

Conversations with Carers is Carers Tasmania's formal Carer engagement program. It will ultimately be comprised of four Reference Groups - each made up of Carers willing to share their experiences, voice a perspective and potentially have input into decision making processes around policy development and systemic advocacy. The four *Conversations with Carers* Reference Groups include:

- Carers of People with a Disability Reference Group
- Mental Health Carers Reference Group
- Older Carers Reference Group
- Young Carers Reference Group

Reference Groups provide a recognised forum that will allow Carers and Carers Tasmania to come together to share concerns and issues, identify common thoughts, present ideas, consider proposals, discuss and develop recommendations for action on matters relating to the needs and issues of Carers in Tasmania.

In preparing this submission, Carers Tasmania utilised the *Conversations with Carers* program to capture the views, perspectives and lived experiences of Carers in Tasmania. We specifically sought feedback about Carers' role in the paid workforce and their reflections on Carer recognition in Tasmania. The methodology involved three focus groups (in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie) and an online survey.



4.0 Caring and Working

Carers Tasmania asks the Tasmanian Government to invest in a program that will actively support Carers in Tasmania to re-engage and/or remain engaged in the paid workforce, undertake study or volunteering roles.

Carers Tasmania believes that supporting Carers to continue to engage or re-engage with the paid workforce, as well as opportunities to study and undertake voluntary work, has the potential to enhance Carers' quality of life, while at the same time contributing to economic benefits for the State.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has found that:

- Tasmanian Carers had a lower labour force participation rate (51.6%) than people who were not Carers (64.2%)²
- Among those in the labour force in 2012, 19.8% of Carers were employed part time and 26.6% were employed full-time. Twenty-two percent (22.2%) of primary Carers were employed part time and 13.1% were employed full-time.³

Carers' lower rates of employment participation affect not only their immediate income, but also their ability to save for retirement in the form of superannuation.⁴

The ageing population will have an impact on the availability of family Carers to take on caring roles in the future, and it is said that Australia will soon reach the 'tipping point' for care, when there are likely to be fewer informal Carers relative to the growing aging population.⁵ "With advances in healthcare, the elderly, chronically ill and those with disabilities are now living longer at the same time as the working age population is decreasing in relative terms."⁶ From now on, it is likely that Tasmania will experience conflicting pressures to increase both our labour supply and our Carer supply. "Supporting people to combine work and care has consequently become not just a social imperative but an economic one."⁷

² Ibid, Table 37.1.

³ Ibid, Table 37.2.

⁴ IMC-Link, 2008, *Report on the profile of Carers in Tasmania*, Carers Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania.

⁵ Carers Australia, 2014, *Combining Work and Care, The Benefits to Carers and the Economy, Report No. 1 Work & Carer Initiative*.

⁶ Ibid, pg. 1.

⁷ Ibid.

4.1 Carers make a significant contribution to the economy

Before discussing the issue of Carer engagement in the paid workforce, it is important to recognise the enormous contribution that unpaid care by family members and friends makes to the economy. This must not be underestimated, and if Carers who are not currently working are to re-engage in the paid workforce, additional support services will be necessary to 'take on' the caring roles that family Carers currently play.

In 2010, Carers Australia commissioned Access Economics to undertake a study of the economic value of the informal care provided by unpaid family Carers for people with disability, mental illness, chronic conditions, terminal illness and the frail aged. The study found that the annual 'replacement value' of informal care had passed the \$40 billion mark. Informal Carers provide 1.32 billion hours of care each year, and represent a precious economic resource in an age of growing health and aged care workforce shortage.⁸

Carers Stories: The economic value of Carers*

"(If Carers were to become more involved in the paid workforce they will need...) to educate prospective employers that Carer's roles are extremely important and save considerable tax payers money and therefore should be recognised as economic contributors. Employers should provide flexibility in the workplace for Carers and also educate their employees as to the importance of Carers and to accept flexibility and understanding. Retraining is an important issue as well."

"I am very lucky that I work in an environment where my caring role is recognised and supported, however I know of many other Carers that are not supported in the same way. I don't believe the huge financial cost of looking after a chronically ill person is recognised, if the Carer works fulltime. For example we do not qualify for a Health Care Card as I work full time, so have to pay full cost for a huge amount of medical care. This financial burden adds to the other burdens of a Carer..."

**Quotes taken from focus groups and questionnaires completed with Carers across Tasmania during September/October 2014*

4.2 Not all Carers are able to work

Carers Tasmania's position on Carer engagement in the paid workforce recognises and respects the diversity of situations within the caring community. While ultimately many Carers want to actively contribute by working, studying or volunteering, for some this may simply not be possible at a particular point in time. Some Carers are currently not able to engage in the workforce for reasons relating to the complexity and nature of the condition(s) of the person(s) they care for, their own health and wellbeing as a Carer, and a question of whether the wider system is adequately responding to the needs of Carers and care recipients.

⁸ Access Economics and Carers Australia, 2010, *The economic value of informal care in 2010*.

Carers Stories: Not all Carers are able to participate in the paid workforce*

“There is a big spectrum....some people might want to combine work and caring, other people can’t imagine going back to work, it’s all about the caring...The thing that shouldn’t be lost is that people should be able to choose and have their choice respected to work or provide care for their loved one. To have it so that it’s not all about how we can get people back to work ...but to also say alongside that there are these other choices that need to be respected, validated and not treated as second rate...and one of those other choices is providing care.”

“I think that sometimes the Carer is just too drained emotionally and physically to even think about going back to the workforce or volunteering. It all depends on individual circumstances.”

“Caring for a child or any family member is generally an especially demanding, unrecognised or appreciated commitment that is all consuming for the Carer. Surely we have moved on from the times when new parents were advised to place their child in an institution, forget them and get on with their lives. The care provided by parents is the reason why children with a disability are able to progress in their development in comparison to the institutional 'care' that was once considered as all the child 'deserved'. To expect a parent to return to work as well as caring for a child with a disability is not practical nor possible when the demands and expectations that the parents provide hours of time to assist that child to reach their potential. Parents and Carers are already under extreme pressure, and their job description includes nurse, teacher, advocate, driver, case co-ordinator, liaison officer, therapist, behaviour management expert, dietitian, cook , launderer, friend, hairdresser, speech pathologist, OT, Physio and the list goes on. Who will fill these roles if a parent/ Carer is then expected to find paid employment outside the caring role? Will the child make the same progress, or will they become emotionally stressed, rocking, self stimulated little beings that was once the product of institutionalised care ??”

“(If Carers were to become more involved in the paid workforce they will need...) a lot of extra help to do the caring and also keep all other aspects of living ticking over, bills, shopping, Dr. visits, etc. Caring is at my house 24-7 and it requires at least as much effort and time as a full time job. If I were working I would have to pay for the extra help needed. Caring and working could be exhausting and could cause me to be an unreliable worker. I already suffer from exhaustion.”

“I find caring at home for my husband who has (condition), is 79 years old while I am 70 years old, extremely stressful and difficult. This makes it almost impossible to partake in anything outside the home.”

“I am now unwell myself with a chronic illness and have been struggling to hide the symptoms from my mother while trying to fulfil my obligations as a Carer.”

**Quotes taken from focus groups and questionnaires completed with Carers across Tasmania during September/October 2014*

Carers Tasmania knows that the caring role can be rewarding as well as extremely challenging. We ask governments to understand the variability, diversity and complexity in the caring role and urge governments to respond with empathy, flexibility and supportive approaches to policy and service development.

4.3 Many Carers want to be part of the workforce, study or volunteer

Research conducted in September/October 2014 by Carers Tasmania, illustrated that Carers generally have a positive attitude towards engaging in the workforce. The vast majority of these Carers (94.5%) agreed that government income support payments were essential for them as a Carer, many recognised that being out of work for a long time can be detrimental to their wellbeing (80.1%). There are multiple benefits to Carers of participating in the workforce: *“Improving Carers’ employment prospects can help address a number of Carer needs including reducing social isolation, improving their financial situation and their self esteem, and providing a form of respite from the caring role.”*⁹

Carers Stories: Workforce participation & Carer health and wellbeing*

“Participating in the workforce is beneficial to the mental wellbeing of Carers allowing interaction and removal from the pressures of their roles....”

“Having been a full time Carer for 3 years I am now employed part time. I have been able to combine both roles because of the support I receive from (a non-government organisation). I believe that I will be able to continue as a Carer for my mother for longer because I am working. I do not feel as isolated from the rest of the community now I am working and I think I am a better Carer because of my employment. Working has boosted my confidence in my ability to be able to return to full time work when my caring role ends.

“I think there are issues of isolation, anxiety and self esteem involved with caring for someone and being out of the work force for a lengthy time (sometimes it’s many years)”

“Engaging in the community through work or volunteering or study is important for personal development and for combating the often socially isolating nature of being a family Carer. However, it can be detrimental to mental health to engage in activities that add to the demands on your time and energy when being a Carer is already generally very time and energy consuming. Participation is best when flexible and casual so as can be moulded to fit around the needs of the Carer and their already significant responsibilities. Work should be made to develop opportunities for such flexible and casual arrangements.”

“Being the Carer of a young child I have found it to be near impossible to find suitable work with the flexibility or hours required. It is not the money as such (although it would certainly help!) but being able to work or volunteer would be of huge benefit as I have found being a Carer to be an extremely isolating experience and very draining mentally and physically.”

“Study makes me feel like I’m interacting with community and society and being an active member, other people volunteer, I like going to school.”

**Quotes taken from focus groups and questionnaires completed with Carers across Tasmania during September/October 2014*

⁹ Carers Australia, 2014, Op-Cit, pg. 4.

Sixty-five percent (64.9%) of Carers in Carers Tasmania's research (September/October 2014) currently do or would like to study, work or volunteer (or do more of these things), as well as being a Carer and receiving income support payments.

ABS data has shown that of the 109,400 primary Carers who were not employed, 25% indicated that would like to be employed, the majority of whom (85.7%) would like to work part-time.¹⁰

In Tasmania, we found that 83.9% of the Carers that participated in the research would try and return to work if their caring role reduced or ceased.

4.4 Barriers and challenges to workforce participation

ABS data illustrated that the most common barriers to employment reported by Carers were "difficulty arranging working hours" (23.0%) and "no alternative disability care arrangements available" (22.4%).¹¹ The types of special working arrangements that all Carers want more of to help combine work and care include paid leave (42.1%), flexible working hours (24.3%) and working from home (13%).¹² Even after the caring role has finished, barriers to employment such as lack of recent job experience, currency of qualifications and lack of confidence remain.¹³ Carers typically face heavy demands and may experience multiple stressors such as poor or reduced physical and/or mental health, poverty, limited educational and workforce opportunities, social isolation and housing stress.¹⁴ Engaging Carers in the workforce will therefore require significant, appropriate, comprehensive and sustained efforts.

In response to the following statement: *If Carers were to become more involved in the paid workforce they will need....*, Carers that participated in Carers Tasmania's research identified the need for:

- **Genuine understanding and recognition, and a comprehensive approach:**

"...understanding, compassion, consideration, encouragement."

"....a lot of support. I would love to return to work but had to give it up because of my children's medical conditions, and I am a single parent with limited support. I do not see myself returning to work in the foreseeable future, but if I were to, I would want the support to transition back into the workplace."

"...to feel a sense of belonging."

"...Carers are special people who have many life experiences and skills, much support is needed and funding for these people to participate in the community as valuable recognised citizens."

".....employment opportunities, equal opportunities, affordable housing, affordable training & education , financial support & advice, respite & care assistance."

¹⁰ ABS, 2009, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers in Carers Australia, 2014, Op-Cit, pg. 3.

¹¹ Edwards B et al 2008, *The nature and impact of caring for family members with a disability in Australia*, AIFS Research Report No. 16, Australian Institute of Family Studies pg.104.

¹² Carers Australia, 2014, *Combining work and care: The business case for Carer-Friendly Workplaces*.

¹³ IMC Link, 2008, Op-Cit.

¹⁴ Selepak L, *Carers of People with Disabilities: Current issues and future trends*, Government of Western Australia, Publications, <http://www.disability.wa.gov.au>

- **More support in the form of services for the person they care for:**

"...more help in the home. I receive no help at the moment as my mother doesn't like outsiders in her home so I am virtually alone with her 23/7. Rarely get respite except when my sister visits or takes mum for me to have a break."

"...regular, reliable, affordable in home support every night from 7pm until 6am as the caring role is a 24 hour job and sleeping issues are a major issue for people with a disability....most especially children. They will need to have access to in home support workers who can attend the family home to care for the care recipient at very short notice during unplanned and unexpected illness of the person with a disability; and when called upon by schools to collect their child when teachers are not prepared to manage behavioural issues. They will need to have regular support for personal care for the care recipient to enable the Carer to prepare for work. They will need to have access to regular, reliable, affordable transport for the person who is being cared for to allow the Carer to attend their workplace in a timely manner. They will need to have an appropriate, well staffed facility that provides program's that cater for the person with a disability. They will need to have support workers who have vehicles to enable the person with a disability to attend medical appointments, therapy appointments, swimming sessions etc. They will need a person who will drop off and pick up medications for Webster packs at the pharmacy for meds to be administered when the Carer is at work."

"...more help with the person they care for. How could you work if you could not leave the person you care for alone for any length of time? There would need to be more respite service available if Carers are expected to work and more assistance from the Community Nursing Service if needed."

"...support to cover the people for whom I care. In my case, two of my children (13 and 16 years) are unable to access education on a consistent basis. I would love to finish my degree and gain employment, as I am tired of struggling financially and the world revolving around need- but I am stuck. I have no current way of extricating myself from caring for sufficient enough periods of time to be able to engage in employment."

- **Flexible and supportive workplaces:**

If Carers were to become more involved in the paid workforce they will need...

"...employers that understand and are sympathetic to Carers fluctuating care demands and responsibilities."

"...to be recognised as Carers by their employer - and that sometimes (especially with young children who need around the clock attention) - you will be late for work, or unable to make a shift at last minute."

"...employers willing to demonstrate empathy, flexibility and understanding."

"...supportive workplace attitudes to the flexibility of blending work and caring combined. This could be as minor as start and finish times that fit within the Carer's responsibilities."

"...understanding by management that because of their role as Carer, they may need leave at short notice to attend to the medical needs of the one they care for. Possibly some change also to the accumulation of carers/sick leave and use thereof. I find most of my sick leave is used as carers leave and then when I do get sick I have either very little leave to use or no leave, so therefore I need to keep working whilst unwell or somehow talk my manager into letting me use some long service leave!! This is very unsatisfactory. It would be extremely helpful if there was something embedded in legislation to recognise the role of Carers."

- **Freedom from discrimination:**

If Carers were to become more involved in the paid workforce they will need...

"...the possibility of a job and not to be discriminated against for taking sick leave or leave if needed to do caring responsibilities such as attending appointments."

"...the assurance that they will be supported and not discriminated against because of their role."

- **Support to improve their own health and wellbeing, so they are well enough to participate in the workplace:**

If Carers were to become more involved in the paid workforce they will need...

"...it's often said that Carers as a group have the worst mental health in the population. When plans are made about the participation of Carers; their disrupted work history, high levels of stress and poor mental health need to be considered."

"...it is very hard to be a good employee as well as a good Carer when caring for yourself comes third on that list of priorities (at least). Adequate sleep, exercise and nutritional diet are vital, but sadly not a daily reality for most Carers."

"...energy. Caring for someone at home almost full time is exhausting and decade after decade there is no relief."

- **A Charter of Rights in the workplace:**

If Carers were to become more involved in the paid workforce they will need...

"...a charter of rights – this would be imperative in the workplace, unless there is written confirmation between both parties, verbal assurances are not worth anything."

- **More support, training and skill development opportunities, and in particular when the caring role ceases:**

If Carers were to become more involved in the paid workforce they will need...

"...I am just finishing some study to make myself more employable and hope it fits in with my caring role. I have been out of the workforce for the past 2 years - a combination of caring for my disabled son but also caring for my dying mother and my father who has dementia. Caring for all 3 made it impossible for me to work, both physically and especially emotionally. My mother has now passed and my father is in a nursing home so only have my son left (although I visit my father often). My confidence levels are just about rock-bottom and I am finding that as I am getting older and time I have been out of the workforce increases, it's getting harder and harder to even get an interview."

"...specialised employment assistance support from Job Support/Employment agencies; counselling services (including vocational guidance & resume development); incentive for employers to make part-time jobs available. for Carers and recognition for employers who adopt Charter; work supplement for Carers who return to work to help with expenses."

"...more training, especially if applicable to 70+ year olds."

"...to be supported for a reasonable period after the caring finished and helped with moving to employment, new life."

"...re-educating or re-training for those who have been out of work for a long time. Then there is the fact that I can't work more than 25 hours per week, so I am sure that I am hardly seen as an ideal candidate either."

"Many Carers have not been employed/volunteering for a number of years. Help with resumes and short return to work courses such as computers. Older Carers don't always have intermediate level of computing."

- **Recognition of skills:**

If Carers were to become more involved in the paid workforce they will need...

"...skills learned as a Carer to be recognised by other employers."

"...The skills and life experience gained as a Carer should be recognised nationally and used as a qualification to gain employment."

In relation to this last point about recognising skills, research with Carers in September/October 2014 identified that 91.3% of Carers agreed that the skills they had acquired as a result of their caring role should be formally recognised by employers or education institutions (if the Carer chooses to make use of those skills to find employment, should their Caring role enable this).

4.5 Other important Tasmanian data to consider

Carers Tasmania also wishes to highlight some key data that we believe should be recognised and taken into consideration when planning for re-engagement of Carers in the paid workforce. Table 1 summarises data relating to the number of Carers in Tasmania, the age of Carers, younger Carers and their engagement with the education system, gender, income and rurality. These factors can act as barriers or enablers to workforce participation and provide important contextual information for policy planning and implementation.

Table 1: Factors that should be considered when planning for Carer re-engagement in the workforce

Issue	Supporting Data
The growing number of Carers - Tasmania has a large and growing number of Carers. The need to recognise this, and for workplaces to respond appropriately will become increasingly important into the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 2012, the ABS identified that there were 73,800 Carers in Tasmania.¹⁵• This equates to 14.7% of the population, the second highest in the country next to Northern Territory, and compared to 13.3% nationally.¹⁶
Age – Carers in Tasmania are mostly people aged 55-64 years. It has been identified that into the future there are likely to be fewer Carers relative to the growing older population. Volunteering and studying opportunities should be made available for older Carers, so they can continue to be active members of society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 2012, the percentage of people living in Tasmanian households that were identified as Carers increased gradually with age from 8.9% of 15-24 year olds to 21.7% of 55-64 year olds, then declined to 7.7% of those aged 75 years and over.¹⁷• The proportion of people who were primary Carers also increased gradually with age, from 12.1% of 35-44 year olds to 23.4% of 55-64 year olds.¹⁸
Tasmania also has a significant proportion of young Carers. Young Carers are our current and future workforce and their needs must be recognised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tasmania has a high proportion of young Carers in Australia, with around 12.2% of Carers in Tasmania aged under 25 years.¹⁹
Education – young Carers face enormous challenges to continuing their education. Education is vital for young Carers, if they are to live fulfilling lives and participate in the workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The impact of the caring role on participation in education can be significant. For example, young Carers are less likely to have completed year 12 (or an equivalent) than their peers, and

¹⁵ ABS, 2014, Op-Cit, Table 33.1.

¹⁶ ABS, 2014, 4430.0 - *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2012, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Carer tables*, Table 36.1.

¹⁷ ABS, 2014, Op-Cit, Table 31.1.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

over 60% of primary Carers aged 15-24 years are not studying.²⁰

- Research shows that isolation and social exclusion are major issues for Carers, and it is not uncommon for student Carers in tertiary education to withdraw from their studies and from the social aspects of university life due to the demands of their caring role. This can have a significant detrimental effect on Carers' future opportunities, with those aged 20 to 24 years more likely than their peers to be unemployed or not in the labour force.²¹
- Those young Carers who do manage to continue their studies often report that school attendance provides a respite from the adult responsibilities they must face at home and offers an opportunity to make social connections and receive information and support.²²
- Despite this, a study of young Carers at school found that caring can have a number of negative impacts on their school experience. Almost 50% reported poor attendance (missing or being late for school because of caring responsibilities).²³ 44% felt they did not achieve the results they were capable of for a number of reasons associated with caring, including tiredness due to sleep interruption (78%), lack of concentration because of worry about the care recipient (82%) and lack of time for homework (54%)²⁴.
- Lack of access to flexible options for undertaking education and training as well as support for their caring responsibilities whilst

²⁰ Students Representative Council Disabilities and Carers Collective, 2013, *Access and Inclusion: Carers in Higher Education*, pg. 3.

²¹ Students Representative Council Disabilities and Carers Collective, 2013, *Access and Inclusion: Carers in Higher Education*, pg. 3.

²² IMC-Link 2008, Op-Cit.

²³ Carers Australia 2002, *Reading, Writing and Responsibility: Young Carers and Education*, report prepared by Institute of Child Protection Studies, ACU National, in IMC-Link 2008, Op-Cit, pg. 12.

²⁴ Students Representative Council Disabilities and Carers Collective, 2013, Op-Cit.

	they undertake education and training programs present barriers for adult learners. ²⁵
<p>Gender – Carers are more likely to be female; females Carers have poorer wellbeing than male Carers. Carer-friendly workplaces are particularly important for females. More must be done to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of the caring community. “Healthy workers are happy workers”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2012, over 66.8% primary Carers were female.²⁶ • Data has shown that over 70% of employed female Carers reported having changed jobs or working arrangements to meet their care responsibilities. Changes included reducing hours, adopting flexible hours, or changing to a job with shorter or more flexible hours.²⁷ • Female Carers have significantly lower wellbeing than male Carers (57.8 and 61.2 respectively).²⁸
<p>Income – Tasmanian Carers have lower incomes than non-carers. Many Carers rely on the Government’s income support system but this does not mean they don’t want to work. As shown above, most Carers have positive attitudes towards workforce participation. Carers must be entitled to adequate income support, as well as given the opportunity to participate in the paid workforce, so that they do not live below the poverty line.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting a caring role can have a major impact on family finances, which in turn affects health and wellbeing. • The median gross personal income per week for Tasmania’s Carers in 2012 was \$417 compared to \$518 for non-carers.²⁹ • Even when considering other income sources such as Government allowances, investments etc, Carers are likely to live in households with lower incomes. 50.1% of Carers and 64.5% of primary Carers live in households in the lowest two quintiles of household income, compared to 39.7% of the general population.³⁰ • Many Carers report that their financial position worsens after adopting a Carer role due to decreased income (21%) and/or increased expenses (23%).³¹ • 61% of these people reported difficulty in meeting day-to-day expenses.³² • Carers receiving Carers Allowance or Payment were more than twice as likely to report difficulty in paying electricity, gas or telephone

²⁵ Ibid, pg. 11.

²⁶ ABS 2014, Op-Cit, Table 33.1.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Deakin University and Carers Australia 2007, *Australian Unity Wellbeing Index*, Survey 17.1, Report 17.1, Special Report, *The Wellbeing of Australians – Carer Health and Wellbeing*, October 2007 in IMC-Link 2008, Op-Cit, pg. 13.

²⁹ ABS 2014, Op-Cit, Table 37.1.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ ABS 2005, Cat. no. 4430.0.55.003 Table 12 in IMC-Link 2008, Op-Cit, pg. 10.

³² Ibid.

	<p>bills on time then were the general population.³³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers are also almost twice as likely to report being worried about their ability to pay for household bills than are non-carers³⁴
<p>Rurality - Tasmania's Carers live in rural and remote areas. Many parts of Tasmania experience high unemployment rates. If Carers are to engage in the workforce, job opportunities (with appropriate conditions) must be provided.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABS data has shown that 65% of Tasmanian Carers live in inner regional areas (as opposed to major cities) and 34% live in outer regional and remote areas of Tasmania.³⁵

4.6 The case for Carer-Friendly Workplaces

Any employee can become a Carer at any time – if a family member or friend has an accident or acquires an illness or disability, or if an ageing parent becomes frail. Addressing the needs of Carers in the workplace is therefore an issue for all employers.³⁶

A Carer-Friendly Workplace is one which offers flexible working conditions which allow employees to combine paid work with an unpaid caring role. Carer-Friendly Workplaces are essential to enabling businesses to foster a productive, efficient and effective workforce.³⁷

Studies have identified numerous benefits associated with becoming a Carer-Friendly Workplace including:

- Attracting and retaining quality staff: Carer-Friendly Workplaces offer an incentive for job-seekers as well as benefiting existing employees
- Improved staff morale and improved staff engagement: many Carers move to lower positions in order to secure flexible working arrangements. This represents a loss of talent and skills for the labour market as a whole and is a waste of both public and private investment in education and development. It can also have a major impact on staff morale.
- Reduced recruitment and training costs, including (the often higher) costs associated with more experienced staff leaving.
- Reduced sick leave and absenteeism: Organisations find that the financial savings achieved through improved retention rates often off-set the costs of leave entitlements.
- Increased productivity and improved service delivery: Implementing flexible workplace practices should be seen as integral to the efforts of businesses to improve their productivity, for such initiatives can help to focus an organisation and its employees more clearly on outputs and outcomes rather than inputs, and on goals rather than processes. Happy employees are productive employees.³⁸

³³ Edwards B et al 2008, Op-Cit, pg. 26. .

³⁴ Deakin University and Carers Australia 2007, Op-Cit.

³⁵ ABS 2010, Op-Cit, Table 32.

³⁶ Carers Australia, 2014, *Combining Work and Carer, The Business Case for Carer-Friendly Workplaces, Report No. 2, Work & Carer Initiative.*

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

Carer-Friendly Workplaces can take on many forms and will depend on the size and nature of the workplace, and the needs and issues of the Carer and the caring situation. Carers may need access to flexible work arrangements such as flexible start or finish times to enable them to provide care.

“My most recent employer had prior to my sons diagnosis held meetings with me asking me if being at work was right for me and my family due to my sons many appointments and general illnesses they were not very helpful and said that I was having to take off too much time for a part time employee and changing/swapping my days and or hours was not convenient for them due to my situation.”

One practical step that all workplaces could take to demonstrate their recognition and support for Carers is to develop and adopt a Work and Carer Charter. Carers Tasmania’s research with Carers in September/October 2014, found that 82.9% of Carers agreed that they would feel more confident that their employer were supportive of their caring role if she or he actively supported a ‘Charter of Rights’ for Carers that was embedded in legislation. An example of a Work and Carer Charter can be found on page 23.

Carers Tasmania's Recommendation to the Tasmanian Government:

- 1. That the Government fund Carers Tasmania (\$90,000 annually) to develop and implement a Carer-Friendly Workplace Program to:**
 - **Develop an accreditation system for employers to become publically recognised as Carer-Friendly Workplaces**
 - **Develop and deliver Carer-Friendly Workplace training for government, non-government and private sector employers and their employees**
 - **Provide ongoing practical support for government, non-government and private employers to employ Carers by offering innovative ideas and strategies that will assist employers to become Carer-Friendly Workplaces**
 - **Support employers to adopt and develop Work and Carer Charters**
 - **Establish a partnership with an organisation to specifically assist Carers to become workforce-ready, e.g. assisting Carers to prepare resumes, developing interview skills with Carers, providing job seeker support to Carers etc.**
- 2. That the Government develop and implement innovate strategies to improve the quantity and quality of care services for people who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail, so as to enable Carers to re-engage and remain engaged in the paid workforce. Where such services are the responsibility of the Federal Government, that the State Government act as a strong advocate for improvements in service delivery that will enable Carers to participate in the paid workforce.**

Example of Work & Care Charter

This Charter is designed to encourage the recruitment and retention of unpaid family and friend Carers and to promote employer awareness of, and positive responses to, Carer needs in the workplace.

As employers who recognise the business benefits of supporting Carers in the workplace, we agree to demonstrate leadership in applying the principles of this charter.

- 1. We know our workforce and understand their needs for flexibility:** It is important for employers to be aware of unpaid family and friend Carers in their employment and to understand the demands of their caring role. This awareness is essential to ensure responsiveness to the needs of Carers for flexibility in order to assist them to combine work and care.

Action: *We will develop a plan of action to help meet the needs of Carers in our workplace.*
- 2. We recognise unpaid Carers in our workforce:** Recognition of employees who are balancing paid work with an unpaid caring role in internal policies, communications and operations is an important first step in fostering an organisational culture in which Carers feel encouraged to disclose their caring role and to discuss their needs for flexibility. While large organisations may want to consider developing a specific Carers Policy, other employers may want to simply include Carers in existing policies.

Action: *We will formally recognise Carers in our internal policies.*
- 3. We keep our staff informed:** Not all employees who combine work with a caring role will self-identify as Carers or be linked in with Carer supports. By disseminating information about the caring role and that there are supports and services available which are targeted to unpaid Carers, employers can help to ensure that their employees who are Carers are aware of, and have access to support outside the organisation. Raising awareness amongst all employees of what a Carer is and why they may need flexible provisions is vital to ensure Carer-friendly policies receive support across the workforce.

Action: *We will disseminate information and resources on the caring role and alert our employees to sources of information about government and community supports for Carers.*
- 4. We offer flexible working and leave conditions (OR We are a flexible employer):** Offering staff flexible working conditions and leave options can be an important way to allow Carers to balance work and caring responsibilities. Flexible working arrangements may include flexi-time, teleworking, job sharing or compressed or annualised working hours. Flexible leave arrangements may include compassionate or Carers' leave for emergency or unplanned caring, or allowing Carers to take a combination of paid and unpaid leave in order to fulfil caring responsibilities.

Action: *We are a flexible employer who offers a range of flexible working and leave conditions.*
- 5. We support management in the promotion and implementation of Carer-friendly policies:** The ability of an organisation to successfully implement workplace policies which support Carers is dependent on the knowledge and leadership of the management team to respond to Carers' requests. Implementing Carer-friendly policies and practices in the workplace requires problem solving, communication, work design, project management and decision making. Management therefore needs to be encouraged and supported in their efforts by the Executive, and employers should consider offering training to management and team leaders to assist with change management.

Action: *We will support and encourage our managers to respond to Carers' requests for flexibility.*

6. **We explore options to support Carers within the workplace:** Approaches to supporting Carers in the workplace will necessarily vary depending on the nature and size of the workforce. Options include the establishment of 'Carer networks' to help link employees who are Carers together, and the provision of Carer-toolkits, among others.

Action: *We will identify ways in which employees who are Carers can be supported within the workplace.*

7. **We involve our staff:** Workplace specific policies and procedures affecting employees who are family and friend Carers should be developed or revised in consultation with employees to ensure that their needs and preferences for working arrangements and conditions are taken into account.

Action: *Wherever possible we will consult with and involve our staff in the development of policies and practices designed to assist Carers in our employment to combine work and care.*

8. **We use our knowledge and experience to help promote further awareness of unpaid family and friend Carers:** Assisting Australia's working Carers to combine employment with their unpaid caring role requires greater awareness about the business benefits of being a Carer-friendly workplace. Employers who have demonstrated leadership in supporting unpaid family and friend Carers can play an important role in sharing their achievements in order to further raise community awareness.

Action: *We will share our experiences and achievements of supporting Carers in our workplace to help promote awareness of unpaid family and friend Carers.*

Organisation _____

Signed _____

5.0 Tasmanian Carer Recognition Legislation

Carers Tasmania was very pleased that Tasmanian Government has continued to support the implementation the Tasmanian Carer Policy 2013 and Tasmanian Carer Action Plan 2013-18. Carers Tasmania is equally pleased to have been an integral partner in the process of developing the Policy and Action Plan, and in supporting its implementation, particularly through the establishment and operation of the Carer Advisory Council.

Carers Tasmania believes that now is the time to take another step towards greater recognition of family and friend Carers in Tasmania. Carers Tasmania believes that Carer Recognition Legislation can subtly enact the rights of Carers particularly in a workplace, and help them to participate effectively.

Tasmania is one of only two Australian States/Territories to not have Carers Recognition Legislation.³⁹ On page 27 of this submission is a summary of the current situation with regard to Carer Recognition Legislation in Australian States and Territories (Table 2). Tasmania is arguably still lagging behind in recognising the invaluable contributions of Carers to the community as well as the economy; and given the evidence presented earlier in this submission (about the importance role Carers can play in the workplace, and in contributing to the local economy), coupled with the Federal Government's policy developments in this area, it would appear timely for the Tasmanian Government to initiate this move.

The purpose of introducing a Carer Recognition Legislation in Tasmania would be to:

- Recognise and support Carers and their role in the community.
- Provide a mechanism for the consideration of Carers' needs and interests.
- Introduce a Carers Charter to relevant organisations, and one that could be used further by Carers Tasmania to share with other organisations not covered by the legislation (see Executive Summary: Recommendations).
- Embed the Carers Advisory Council within a legislative framework.
- Provide for reporting by organisations on activities carried out under the Carers Charter.

Carers Tasmania's Recommendation to the Tasmanian Government:

- **That the Government develop a Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act.**

³⁹ *Legislation Handbook*, 2009, http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/113624/actgov-legislation-handbook.pdf.

Table 2: Summary of Carer Recognition Legislation and Charters in Australian State and Territories

State/Territory	Summary of Carer Recognition Legislation / Carer Charter
ACT	<p>The ACT Carers Charter was launched on 19 October 2011. The Charter is intended to improve the circumstances of Carers by raising community awareness and promoting Carers' role in service delivery. The Charter consists of five concise core principles. Broadly these focus on ensuring that Carers are engaged, supported and able to achieve a quality of life that is in line with community standards. This is in line with the renewed vision of the Canberra Social Plan 2011 for people to reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of an inclusive community.</p> <p>See more: http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/caring_for_carers</p>
New South Wales	<p>The NSW <u>Carers (Recognition) Act 2010</u> (the Act) was introduced to provide recognition of Carers and to establish a Carers Advisory Council. The Act requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government departments and local councils make sure all staff are aware of and understand the Carers Charter • Staff in human service agencies reflect the principles of the Charter in their core business activities • Government departments and local councils consult with appropriate organisations or bodies that represent Carers when developing policies that will impact on Carers • Government departments and local councils develop human resources policies following consideration of the Carers Charter. <p>The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) is responsible for leading the implementation of the Act across all public sector agencies. <u>The NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010 Implementation Plan 2011 – 2014 (PDF)</u> provides a clear understanding of the obligations of public sector and human service agencies under this Act.</p> <p>The NSW Carers Charter contains 13 principles that provide guidance on issues of significance for Carers, including respect and recognition, inclusion in decision making, and access to services they may need. Human service agencies in the NSW public sector are required to reflect the principles of the Carers Charter and, therefore, must consider how to incorporate the support and recognition of Carers who are clients into their core business.</p> <p>The Act establishes a NSW Carers Advisory Council to promote the interests of Carers. The Council also reviews and makes recommendations to the Minister for Disability Services and Minister for Ageing on relevant issues. The Council is Chaired by the Minister for Ageing and Minister for Disability Services and the majority of its members are Carers.</p>

See more at:

http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/individuals/caring_for_someone/nsw_carers_recognition_act_2010#sthash.V03gindO.dpuf

Northern Territory

Northern Territory has a Carer Recognition Act which came into effect in November 2014. The Act requires that the Carer Charter apply to all Government Departments and all organisations funded by the Territory Government. The Carer Charter states:

1. Carers must be treated with respect and dignity.
2. Carers must be acknowledged as individuals with their own needs within and beyond the role of Carer.
3. The diversity of Carers' individual needs must be acknowledged and identified, taking into consideration cultural and linguistic differences, age, disability, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identification and where people live. In particular, it is important to recognise the needs of Aboriginal Carers and children and young people who are Carers.
4. Carers must receive information on their rights when dealing with Agencies.
5. The role of Carers must be formally recognised by including Carers in the assessment, planning, delivery and review of services that impact on them and their caring role.
6. The views and needs of Carers must be taken into account along with the views, needs and best interests of people receiving care when decisions are made that impact on Carers and their caring role.
7. Programs and services for Carers must be responsive, coordinated and appropriate.
8. Complaints made by Carers about services that impact on them and the role of Carers must be properly considered.

See more:

<http://notes.nt.gov.au/dcm/legislat/legislat.nsf/linkreference/CARERS%20RECOGNITION%20ACT?opendocument>

Queensland

The objects of Queensland's Carer Recognition Act 2008 are: (a) to recognise the valuable contribution by Carers to the people they care for; and (b) to recognise the benefit, including the social and economic benefit, provided by Carers to the community; and (c) to provide for the interests of Carers to be considered in decisions about the provision of services that impact on the role of Carers; and (d) to establish the Carers Advisory Council. The Act includes a Carer Charter.

See more at: <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/ACTS/2008/08AC070.pdf>

South Australia	<p>The South Australian Carers Recognition Act 2005 requires the State Government to be aware of Carers' needs and provide services that reflect the Act and principles of the Carers Charter.</p> <p>Carers must be consulted in the planning, delivery and review of government and government-funded services that impact on Carers.</p> <p>The Act is administered by the Office for Carers within the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.</p> <p>See more at: https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/community-support/carers/carers-rights-and-legislation/sa-carers-recognition-act-2005</p>
Victoria	<p>The Carers Recognition Act 2012 (the Act) formally recognises and values the role of Carers and the importance of care relationships in the Victorian community.</p> <p>The Act includes a set of principles about the significance of care relationships, and specifies obligations for state government agencies, local councils, and other organisations that interact with people in care relationships.</p> <p>The provisions in the Act build on and expand the Victorian charter supporting people in care relationships, which came into effect in 2010. The Charter has been updated to reflect the new Act.</p> <p>The Carers Recognition Act came into effect on 1 July 2012.</p> <p>See more at: http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/carers-recognition-act-2012</p>
Western Australia	<p>The Western Australian Carers Recognition Act 2004 came into effect on 1 January 2005 and is an important step in supporting the crucial and often complex role of Carers.</p> <p>The Act is aimed at changing the culture of service providers so that the impact on Carers is considered when services are assessed, planned, delivered and reviewed.</p> <p>A key part of the Act requires service providers to comply with the Western Australian Carers Charter. The Charter provides clear direction on how Carers are to be treated and how Carers are to be involved in the delivery of services. The Act also establishes the Carers Advisory Council which advises the Minister for Community Services of compliance with the legislation and provides advice to the government on matters relating to Carers.</p> <p>Under the legislation all state government funded or administered health and disability service providers are required to take all practicable measures to ensure that they comply with the Carers Charter. In addition, these agencies must involve Carers, (or persons and bodies that represent Carers), in any policy or program</p>

development, or strategic or operational planning that may affect Carers and their roles. These agencies will also have to report annually to the Minister for Community Services through the Carers Advisory Council on their performance and obligations under this Act.

Funded organisations are not required to provide a report but will need to demonstrate their compliance with the Carers Charter as part of their contractual obligations to the department funding their services.

See more: <http://www.communities.wa.gov.au/communities-in-focus/carers/Pages/Carers-Recognition-Act.aspx>