

Federal Budget October 2022-23

What it means for carers





Introduction

The Albanese government's 2022-23 Federal Budget was delivered on 25 October 2022. It contains several measures that may indirectly support carers¹ through increased supports to the person receiving care. Carers may also directly benefit from measures if they are disabled, living with mental ill-health or chronic conditions, or accessing aged care services or seeking employment themselves.

The Carers Australia [October 2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission](#) called for a range of measures to benefit carers, none of which were met by government:

- A Commissioner for Carers within Government (\$12 million/4 years).
- A National Carer Strategy endorsed by Australian Health Ministers (\$1.2 million/2 years).
- Commission a review of economic and financial security for carers by the Productivity Commission (\$5.2 million/3 years).
- Investigate the barriers to equitable access to respite care (\$2 million/2 years).
- Better support for the mental health and wellbeing needs of carers (\$8.5 million/3 years).
- Provide independent individual advocacy for carers (\$25 million/3 years).

Carers Australia will now look to the government to action the pre-election commitment of a new National Carers Strategy within its first term, and advocate for funding within the 2023-24 Federal Budget. This will lay the foundation to address the lack of recognition of the caring role and its impacts on carers. Such impacts include not being identified by services they interact with, and not getting access to appropriate and timely respite care and support. These should be critical structural factors to our health, aged care, mental health, disability care and social services systems.

Set out below is an overview of the October 2022-23 Federal Budget measures that may affect carers. There may be other relevant measures that are not included in this overview and more detailed information can be found at www.budget.gov.au. Note that Budget measures must be passed by Parliament before they can come into effect.

¹ Carers Australia uses the term 'carer' as defined by the [Commonwealth Carer Recognition Act 2010](#) (the Act), where it should not be used broadly and without context to describe a paid care worker, volunteer, foster carer or a family member or friend who is not a carer. The terms 'informal carer', 'unpaid carer' or 'family and friend carer' are also often used by organisations, government and the community to describe a carer. Carers Australia may use these terms to assist in providing context and to differentiate between other types of care provision.



Mental Health

What was in the Budget?

\$23.5 million over four years to expand and strengthen Headspace services.

\$47.7 million to reinstate telehealth bulked billed payments for mental health services in regional and remote areas.

Who does this affect?

The additional Headspace funding will help to meet the growing demand for online and phone counselling support for young people aged 12 to 25 years who are experiencing, or at risk of, mental ill-health.

The telehealth measure is expected to support approximately 543,000 consultations over five years for people in regional and remote areas who have trouble accessing face-to-face mental health services or affording telehealth services.

What does it mean for me as a carer?

While these measures will support certain carers by extension, none of the announced mental health and wellbeing funding is specifically aimed at the mental health and wellbeing needs of carers.

However, Headspace provides a valuable service to young carers who may be experiencing difficulties with their mental health. Young carers often try to combine education, work and community involvement with their caring responsibilities. They may also experience the emotional and psychological stresses which often accompany caring roles.

Similarly, the bulk billed regional and remote telehealth services will be welcomed by carers of people living with mental illness, or who are having their own mental health challenges. These services may be particularly useful to those carers in flood-affected areas, who may require extra support to cope with losses while continuing to provide care.

The 2022 Carer Wellbeing Survey found that carers are three times less likely to have high levels of wellbeing than the average Australian, and twice as likely to have high levels of psychological stress.

Lower wellbeing was more common amongst people caring for a person living with a mental illness or psychosocial disability. Their general health was also considerably lower, and their experience of loneliness was higher. 44.1% of mental health carers reported feeling lonely “often” or “always”, compared to 39.4% of all carers and 10.3% of all Australians.



Disability Support

What was in the Budget?

\$126.3 million over 4 years to address fraud and serious non-compliance in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) by establishing a cross-agency Fraud Fusion Taskforce.

\$437.4 million over 3 years to support people with disabilities and their families, including:

- \$21.2 million for NDIS Appeals providers to support participants and their families with the appeals process, and
- \$18.1 million to review NDIS design, operations and sustainability.

\$4.2 million over 2 years to develop a whole-of-government strategy to coordinate investment in policy and programs for early childhood development.

\$47 million over 4 years to support people with disabilities and their families, including \$11.2 million to increase funding for systemic disability advocacy.

\$5.3 million over two years to improve outcomes for autistic people, including \$1 million to develop a National Autism Strategy.

\$15.9 million over 4 years to establish and support a National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health.

Who does this affect?

These changes will affect people with disabilities and their carers who seek or receive NDIS supports. There is some dedicated funding intended to support parents and carers during early childhood development, and increase resources for people with intellectual disabilities and autistic people.

What does it mean for me as a carer?

Carers will benefit from anything which makes it easier for them and the people they care for to engage with the NDIS. It is helpful to be able to access NDIS supports without having to navigate complex and time-consuming processes. However, Carers Australia highlight that not all people with disabilities want to engage with or are eligible for NDIS packages – there must be better mainstream supports outside the NDIS.

A dedicated strategy to support autistic children and adults will hopefully embed support needs across government and involve autistic people and carers in co-design. Similarly, carers and people with intellectual disabilities must be included in activities of the Centre for Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health. The Centre must also look at interfaces with disability, mental health and aged care, not only physical health.

The 2022 Carer Wellbeing Survey found carers of autistic people have lower rates of wellbeing and higher rates of psychological distress compared to other types of caring situations, as well as the general population.

Results also showed that COVID-19 had the greatest impact on carers of people with

intellectual disabilities or autism, including reduced access to support. 78.5% of carers for people with intellectual disabilities and 72.1% of carers autistic people reported this, compared with 61.5% of all carers.



Aged Care

What was in the Budget?

\$2.5 billion over 4 years to 'fix the aged care crisis.' This includes requiring all residential aged care facilities to have a registered nurse onsite 24 hours per day, 7 days per week from 1 July 2023. It also provides for establishing a national registration scheme and code of conduct for paid personal care workers in the aged care sector.

\$53.5 for 12 months from January 2023 to extend the Disability Support for Older Australians Program to 31 December 2023.

23.1 million for implementing the Support at Home Program from July 2024 and extend existing grant arrangements for the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) to 30 June 2024.

There were many other measures related to outcomes of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, as well as specifically addressing residential aged care services in regional areas, and to First Nations people.

Who does this affect?

This will help people living in residential aged care and allow more time for consultation on how home care supports will be delivered from June 2024. Those waiting for home care supports will benefit.

What does it mean for me as a carer?

There were no aged care measures funded in the Budget that will directly benefit carers of older people. However, the measures directed toward improving the quality and safety of residential aged care will be appreciated by carers. This may assist carers who feel they cannot continue to provide the level of care needed at home, and those who seek access to respite through residential aged care providers.

Major improvements to home care, including access to community respite, remain a work in progress and are expected to be introduced in July 2024. Carers Australia is making strong representations that carers must be involved in consultation and co-design processes. We are emphasising that adequate and timely home-based support for the aged care recipient *and* the carer are necessary to allow people to choose to remain in the home.

This includes carers of older Australians, *and* older carers aged over 65 years who may be also accessing aged care services. These carers accounted for 34% of all carers in 2018 ([2018 SDAC](#)), each having different needs and interface with the aged care system.

The [2022 Carer Wellbeing Survey](#) investigated the barriers carers experienced when seeking access to support services for the people they cared for. The most significant of these were lack of funding for the service (including My Aged Care), difficulty finding high quality services, complicated application processes, long waiting times to access services, lack of local service availability, staff turnover amongst service providers and poor coordination between services. Most carers reported

experiencing multiple of these barriers, highlighting the complex range of challenges many carers face when seeking to access support services. Carers aged 65 and older were also less likely to access psychological support services.



Social Security

What was in the Budget?

\$217.7 million over 4 years to abolish the Cashless Debit Card and commence transition to voluntary income management. Participants will transition off the card from 6 March 2023.

\$61.9 million over two years for age and Veteran pensioners to receive a once off credit of \$4,000 to their Work Bonus income bank, which will increase what they can earn from \$7,800 to \$11,800 before pension is reduced.

Who does this affect?

People who were compelled to have 80% of their payments attached to a Cashless Debit Card, which imposes limits on how they use their payments, will transition out of this scheme.

Aged and veteran pensioners who will be able to earn more before the amount they receive in their pension payment related to their employment income begins to decrease.

What does it mean for me as a carer?

For carers who have been part of the Cashless Debit Card program in specific regions of South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland, its abolition will come as a relief. They will be able to self-manage their payments, make their own decisions and better support the person(s) they care for to manage their funds. However, since 3 October 2022, participants can still volunteer for the program or move to self-managed payments. More information on this process is available [here](#).

Carers over Age Pension age (66 years and 6 months) who receive a pension are able to earn more through employment before their pension is impacted. This includes recipients of the Age Pension, Carer Payment, Disability Support Pension, and Department of Veterans' Affairs Service Pensioners. Information on the Work Bonus income bank is available [here](#).



Access to Medicines

What was in the Budget?

\$1.4 billion over 4 years including new or amended listing of certain medicines, which will reduce the out-of-pocket costs for these treatments.

\$787.1 million over 4 years to decrease the general co-payment for treatments on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) from \$42.50 to \$30.00.

Who does this affect?

All Australians purchasing PBS-listed medicines will benefit from the changes to the general co-payment. People with certain medical conditions will also benefit from new or amended medications on the PBS.

What does it mean for me as carer?

If you or the person you are caring for take medicines, you will pay \$12.50 less for each PBS listed medicine with these changes when a prescription is filled.



Employment & Training

What was in the Budget?

\$76.4 million over 4 years for outcomes of the Jobs and Skills Summit, including \$2 million over 3 years to develop a Carer Friendly Workplace Framework.

\$19.4 million towards Disability Employment Services (DES) to extend DES for two years while a new model is built to better support people with disabilities to find ongoing employment.

Who does this affect?

Carers and people with disabilities who are seeking employment and engaged with Disability Employment Services.

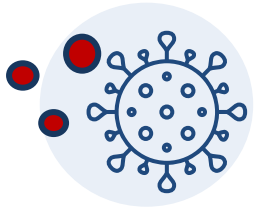
What does it mean for me as carer?

Carers in Australia experience considerably poorer employment outcomes, with a 52.2% employment ratio compared with 75.9% for people without caring responsibilities ([2018 SDAC](#)). Efforts to improve carer-inclusivity within the workforce are essential, and we look forward to receiving further information on the Carer-Friendly Workplace Framework.

Carers Australia and the National Carer Network commissioned the [Caring Costs Us Report](#), which modelled the economic impacts on lifetime income and retirement savings of carers. On average, Australian carers will lose \$392,500 in lifetime earnings to age 67; and \$175,000 in superannuation at age 67 due to reduced or ceased employment.

We welcome support for a people with disabilities to acquire and maintain employment. The process of designing a better model to support disability employment options must involve disabled people and carers. It should be noted that over one-third (37.4%) of primary carers had disability themselves in 2018. This is twice the rate of non-carers (15.3%) ([2018 SDAC](#)).

Difficulties in finding and maintaining meaningful employment for people with disabilities often impacts their carers. This may be because they need to provide additional financial support, even in circumstances where they themselves are in financial stress, or that they cannot retain their own employment due to the caring role. People with disabilities can also miss out on emotional and psychological benefits from participating in the workforce when they are not employed.



COVID-19 and Disease Control

What was in the Budget?

\$3.2 million for initial design for the establishment of an Australian Centre for Disease Control. The funding will incorporate stakeholder consultations to ensure the new Centre will support improved pandemic preparedness and response.

\$808.2 million to extend elements of the pandemic response to 31 December 2022 including funding for vaccine delivery, testing and treatments.

\$845.4 million in 2022-23 to support the ongoing impacts of COVID on the aged care sector, extending the March 2022 budget measures.

\$410.3 million in 2022-23 for Rapid Antigen Tests and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to support outbreaks and prevent spread of COVID-19 in high-risk settings. These include extended access to PPE for residential aged care, residential disability care and NDIS participants' supported independent living arrangements until 31 December 2022.

\$355.8 million in 2022-23 for the ongoing distribution and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines, including the fourth vaccine and communication activities.

Who does this affect?

Establishing an Australian Centre for Disease Control will improve Australia's ongoing response to current and emerging public health emergencies. Ongoing COVID-19 funding will allow governments to continue responding to COVID-19, limit the spread of the disease, and respond to outbreaks in high-risk settings.

What does it mean for me as carer?

It is essential that carers are included in stakeholder consultations for the new Centre for Disease Control. Although Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing and contexts are constantly changing, future disaster preparedness and response planning must be inclusive of and accessible to carers. This will only be possible if it is underpinned by a clear recognition of the multiple layers of disadvantage that carers already experience.

Social isolation is an everyday experience for carers. It dramatically increased during the pandemic and exacerbated carer stress and anxiety. Carers had to provide support to those in their care as they confronted the very real risk of becoming extremely unwell from COVID-19. Many in need of care were in identified 'vulnerable' populations. The responsibility of many carers increased during the COVID-19 pandemic as their usual support networks became unavailable or had their capacity reduced. This caused carers to lose access to crucial supports such as respite care, school, early intervention programs, social support programs, day centres, and home care.

The [2022 Carer Wellbeing Survey](#) found more than 70% of carers reduced their social interaction to protect the people they cared for, and increased the intensity in their

caregiving responsibilities. The majority of carers reported delays or cancellations in treatment or therapy for care recipients and difficulty accessing testing. For more than 50%, access to informal support also declined where family and friends lost the ability to offer assistance.

The ongoing pandemic caused carers to experience disrupted services, loss of income and increased psychological stress. The long-term physical, emotional and financial impacts of the pandemic on carers are yet to be fully appreciated.

About Carers Australia

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing the diversity of the 2.65 million Australians who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends with a disability, chronic condition, mental illness or disorder, alcohol or other drug related condition, terminal illness, or who are frail aged.

In collaboration with our members, the peak carer organisations in each state and territory, we collectively form the National Carer Network and are an established infrastructure that represent the views of carers at the national level.

Our vision is an Australia that values and supports all carers, where all carers should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family, social and community life, employment and education.

Disclaimer: This document has been developed to provide basic information about the main October 2022-23 Federal Budget measures in relation to carers. It is not possible to cover every measure that may apply to carers and their individual circumstances.

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