



**Towards a Sustainable Future for
Family Carers in the ACT**

ACT Pre-Budget Submission 2008-09

Carers ACT acknowledges that modern day Canberra has been built on the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to their elders and recognize the displacement and disadvantage they have suffered since European settlement. Carers ACT celebrates the Ngunnawal's living culture and valuable contribution to the ACT community.

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1. Executive Overview and Summary Recommendations

Carers ACT is a non-profit, community based, incorporated association and registered charity dedicated to improving the lives of the estimated 43,000 family Carers living in the Australian Capital Territory. We represent unpaid family Carers who are providing care for people with disabilities, mental illness, chronic conditions, palliative care, or who are aged and frail.

Our role is to work in active partnership with Carers, people with care and support needs, health professionals, service providers, government and the wider community to achieve better understanding and an improved quality of life for Carers.

Research has shown that Carers are already a group at risk, more vulnerable to the pressure of external social and economic factors than the majority of non-Carers in the population. Yet anyone can become a Carer, at any time, as we all have family, friends or neighbours who may need our care at some time in their lifespan, therefore decisions on future supports for Carers have a much wider reach than the current 43,000 Carers already resident in the ACT.

Many Carers provide a high volume of care which is essential for the quality of life of the dependent person. It is clear that if Carers did not provide this care, government or other care services would be unable to provide an equivalent quality or level of care and the budget impact of provision of such care would be immediately unsustainable.

Unpaid family Carers currently save the ACT economy approximately \$524.6 million per annum in replacement formal care services. Therefore, the ability of Carers to continue providing informal care becomes a critical issue of strategic investment, and the development of effective strategies which increase the capacity of the sector to support existing and future Carers simply makes good economic sense.

Demographic and economic pressures are already having a significant impact on the provision of both formal and informal community care in the ACT. As the demand for services increases, and the ratio of Carers able to provide informal care decreases, the potential impact on future budgets will be significant and must be addressed as an immediate priority within the Territory.

There is a compelling case for government and community to work together to assist Carers in their role, and develop a responsive support structure that will also address the expected demographic challenges of the future in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Carers ACT respectfully requests that the ACT Government implement the following recommendations in the 2008-2009 budget to ensure the establishment of a sustainable future for Family Carers in the ACT:

1. **That the ACT Government commit to developing a Carers Action Plan (2008 onwards) and address the non-legislative reforms as identified in the recent Carer Legislation Review process.**
2. **That a *Territory Carer Reference Network* be formalized to provide expert advice and inform future policy development on Carer issues in the ACT. Funding for Secretariate Support: \$40,000 per annum.**
3. **That the ACT Government fund Carers ACT as a peak body on a recurrent basis of \$230,000 in year one, \$375,000 in year two, \$370,000 in year three, then \$330,000 per annum from year four onwards.**
4. **That the ACT Government provide a leadership role in developing a transition assistance scheme for re-skilling Carers in the ACT.**
5. **That the ACT Government fund the implementation of a Young Carer Case Management position on a recurrent basis of \$80,000 per annum, over three years.**

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2. Who We Are

Carers ACT is a non-profit, community based incorporated association and registered charity dedicated to improving the lives of the estimated 43,000 family Carers living in the Australian Capital Territory. We represent unpaid family Carers who are providing care for people with disabilities, mental illness, chronic conditions, palliative care, or who are aged and frail. Our role is to work in active partnership with Carers, people with care and support needs, health professionals, service providers, government and the wider community to achieve better understanding and an improved quality of life for Carers.

Carers ACT was established as an incorporated association in 1992. Since then, we have worked with Carers Australia and the national network of Carers Associations to assist the Australian Government to recognize and address the growing needs of Carers. This has resulted in a shift of government policy, at both a federal and state/territory level, to increase recognition of the value of Carers' roles in the community and the initiation of program funding to deliver Carer services and support.

Carers ACT and the national network are now engaged in International Carer Alliances with countries such as the USA, Canada and the UK to share research and information which will assist to build sustainable programs that support the diverse needs of Carers in the community.

In the Australian Capital Territory, Carers ACT directly provides a holistic range of support and services to family Carers – including counseling, some individual advocacy, education and training, and respite services (either in-home or residential). The Association also runs two specialist respite cottages offering best practice models for people with dementia and adults with disabilities, respectively.

Additional programs aim to offer specialist support to Carer groups with identified diversity of need, including programs for Indigenous Carers, Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Carers, Mature Age Carers, Young Carers, and for Carers of people with mental health issues. Our advocacy for Carers is based on the following six principles:

- Caring is a personal, social and public responsibility shared by individuals, families, business, community organisations, public institutions and all levels of government.
- Carers are recognised and valued for their important contribution to the wellbeing of the Australian community and the people whom they support and for their unique expertise and skills in the caring role.
- Carers are also recognised as individuals with their own needs within and beyond the caring situation.

- Carers are entitled to the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians in order to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and to participate in family, social and community life, employment and education.
- Carers are included in decision-making that relates to their care situation and impacts on their lives. Carers have a voice in legislation, policy and program development, service implementation and evaluation across all sectors.
- Carers are able to access a wide range of information and resources, informal support and responsive, affordable services to complement caring. They are entitled to Carer friendly policies and practices in other areas of their lives.

3. Caring in the ACT – the Need for a Sustainable Future

The ACT Government has asserted that “Canberrans ... have a right to share in the benefits of our community and to contribute to that community.” (ACT Govt., 2007, p.11). The challenges facing our community in the years ahead, from both internal and external factors, will require innovation, creativity and a strong focus on sustainable, equitable solutions.

Research has shown that Carers are already a group at risk, more vulnerable to the pressure of external social and economic factors than the majority of non-Carers in the population. Yet anyone can become a Carer, at any time, as we all have family, friends or neighbours who may need our care at some time in their lifespan, therefore decisions on future supports for Carers have a much wider reach than the current 43,000 Carers already resident in the ACT.

The 2003 Australian Bureau of Statistics *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers* indicated there are at least 2.5 million Carers in Australia, of which 474,000 are primary Carers. More recent estimates by Access Economics (2005) indicate that one in eight Australians are now providing some form of informal care to a relative or friend. Total hours of care in 2005 were estimated at 1.2 billion, but the distribution of care was not homogenous across the population. For example, primary Carers represented 20 percent of the total Carer population, yet they provided 54 per cent of all care hours.

The majority of Carers were of workforce age (18-64 years) representing 75.6 per cent of all Carers. Young Carers (under 18 years) comprised 6.6 per cent of the Carer population and Carers over the age of 65 years represented 17.7 per cent. Carers are a diverse population and can be found in all parts of our community. While there are common areas of need, it is clear that different age groups and circumstances may require different policy and service responses to better assist people in their caring role.

In economic and social terms, Carers make a very valuable contribution to the person they care for, to their families and to the community. Without their care people would have to manage on their own in less than optimal circumstances or find alternative care. Often alternative care means residential care, which is unsatisfactory if the person wants to live in their own home and maintain their independence.

Many Carers provide a high volume of care which is essential for the quality of life of the dependent person. It is clear that if Carers did not provide this care, government or other care services would be unable to provide an equivalent quality or level of care and the budget impact of provision of such care would be immediately unsustainable.

The economic and social cost of informal care is largely borne by the Carers, who do the work in an unpaid capacity. Most Carers find themselves juggling

competing demands for their time and resources, which greatly limits their capacity for employment in the paid workforce. Access Economics (2005) has conservatively estimated this opportunity cost at \$4.9 billion per year. At the same time, the replacement value of informal care with purchased formal care in the home would be at least \$30.5 billion a year.

Analysis of costs indicates that public subsidies for informal care remain significantly lower than for other forms of assistance that assist people to retain community-based residence. The Home and Community Care program (97.5 per cent), Community Aged Care Package (86 per cent) and Extended Aged Care at Home packages (95 per cent) receive the highest rates of government subsidy, compared to 35 per cent for informal care based on replacement cost for all Carers.

Recognition of the economic value of Carers' work also fails to consider the cost to the Carer's own physical and mental health. Numerous studies have confirmed that the Carer's health is likely to deteriorate as a result of the stress and strain of intense caring in long term care situations. The most recent report comes from the *Australian Unity Wellbeing Index (2005)* produced by the Australian Centre on Quality of Life at Deakin University, where a special survey topic on caring revealed:

- Living in the same household as a person who requires care reduced wellbeing, irrespective of whether the person is the primary Carer or not;
- The burden of care is greater if the person requiring care is elderly rather than a young child;
- The dual care of children and an elderly or disabled person is likely to damage the wellbeing of the Carer;
- Caring for an elderly or disabled person without the assistance of a partner is likely to damage wellbeing;
- Caring for an elderly or disabled person while also carrying a full-time job is likely to damage wellbeing.

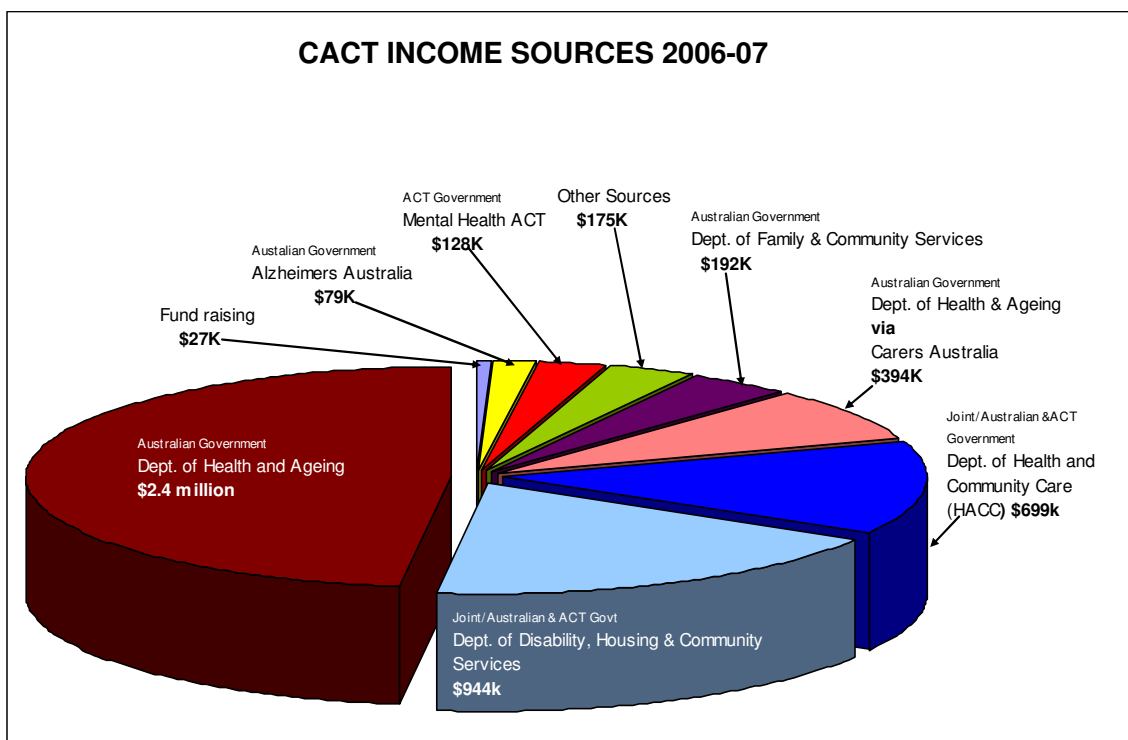
Given that the demographics of Australia's population are changing toward a greater number of older people in the community and a greater number with disabilities, it is likely that more people will need both informal and formal care. A NATSEM study, *Who's going to care? Informal care and an ageing population* (2004) found that, over the next thirty years, persons over 65 years are projected to account for 63 per cent of all profoundly and severely disabled persons (up from 44 per cent in 2001). Over the same period, the ratio of Carers to people aged 65 and over needing care (with a profound or severe disability) will drop from 57 Carers for every 100 people in 2001 to just 35 for every 100 by 2031.

This national trend will impact on the Territory, as the *Canberra Social Plan: Progress Report (June 2007)* states

The ACT is distinguished by the fact that, because of low fertility rates and longer life expectancy, the median is increasing more rapidly. In that sense, it can be said that the 'ACT is ageing faster' than any other jurisdiction.

As the demand for services increases, and the ratio of Carers able to provide informal care decreases, the potential impact on future budgets will be significant and must be addressed as an immediate priority within the Territory. The ACT government will require a minimum 22% capacity increase on provision of formal care services, above normal increases for growth and inflation, to meet the projected decline in Carer ratio alone. Therefore, the ability of Carers to continue providing informal care becomes a critical issue of strategic investment, and the development of effective strategies which increase the capacity of the sector to support existing and future Carers simply makes good economic sense. For example, consider the following application of the results reported by Access Economics (2005) which indicates that unpaid family Carers currently save the ACT economy approximately \$524.6 million per annum in replacement formal care services. The amount presently invested by the ACT Government on Carer supports and services is miniscule compared to these savings.

The ACT Government contributes around one-fifth of Carers ACT funding income to provide direct services and supports to Carers (50% of CSTDA funded Disability, 20% of HACC programs and \$128k in mental health program support). The following shows a breakdown of our funding for 2006-07:



The political, economic and social value of Carers and their essential role in the provision of informal care in the community has been highlighted above. While caring is a normal part of life, the role does go beyond that of normal family relationships and creates additional stress and strain beyond common expectations. People needing care usually prefer to live in the community but it is now well-recognized that they may need assistance to do so. There is, therefore, a compelling case for government and community to work together to assist Carers in their role, and develop a responsive support structure that will also address the expected demographic challenges of the future in a responsible and sustainable manner.

4. Building on Carer Legislation

Carers ACT welcomed the ACT Government's recognition and commitment to Carer needs in *The Canberra Social Plan* which stated that "The Government will ensure adoption of the principles and objectives set out in the Caring for Carers Policy" (ACT Govt, 2004, p.39). The *Caring for Carers Policy* aimed to acknowledge and support family Carers in the ACT, stating seven core principles which underlined the government's commitment to developing a philosophy of Carer support based on best practice.

The policy was followed by the release of *Caring for Carers in the ACT – A Plan for Action 2004-08*, which detailed thirty-four actions for the ACT Government to improve recognition of the role and needs of Carers in the community, and provide timely, accessible and effective assistance to support them in their caring role.

The subsequent *Carers Recognition Legislation Amendment Act 2006* recognized the special role of Carers and amended specific provisions within the following Acts in relation to Carers rights and responsibilities:

- *The Discrimination Act 1991*
- *The Guardianship and Management of Property Act 1991*; and
- *The Human Rights Commission Act 2005*.

Analysis of the legislation revealed that it does little to achieve the aspirations of the core principles stated in the *Caring for Carers Policy*. Recognition of Carers and of shared care responsibilities is indeed a step in the right direction, but many critical areas of need remain unaddressed. The amended legislation did not offer any direction for additional supports for Carers, nor did it formalize any measurable indicator or target for achieving the goals for Carers. It did not construct a program for implementation nor establish an independent body to assure compliance with the Act. There is not even any provision to educate the community about the legislation and how it affects them.

In *Building Our Community: The Canberra Social Plan* the government maintains its intention to provide "a reference point for a generation of policy makers" (2004, p.64) but there is a fundamental flaw in a plan which acknowledges the need of Carers but fails to inspire a commitment to meeting that need in a fair and equitable way.

Legislative reform for Carers has also been a key priority for other states and territories within Australia. The *Carers Recognition Act 2004* was passed with bi-partisan support in the WA Parliament. It outlined a four point Carers Charter, providing for the establishment of a Carer Advisory Council to advise government departments on all issues affecting Carers, and receive annual legislative compliance reports from relevant departments. The Council also performs a role in reviewing the non-legislative reforms identified in the Carer Legislation

development process, thus working as an impetus and mechanism for continued improvement in real terms for Carers.

The Act also provided for 0.2 FTE secretariate support to the Council, based at the Office of Seniors Interests and Volunteering. There was no initial provision for rollout funding in the Act, but the WA Government has currently allocated a total of \$110,000 funding over a two year period to enable Carers WA to develop and implement two legislative education programs, one for service providers and one to educate Carers. Indeed, three years after the legislation was passed, training needs assessments recently conducted by Carers WA as part of this project, have indicated significant levels of confusion and misunderstanding continue to exist in the service provider sector.

Recommendation: That the ACT Government commit to developing a Carers Action Plan (2008 onwards) and address the non-legislative reforms as identified in the recent Carer Legislation Review process.

5. Recognize and Support the Peak Body for Carers

Complexity of Caring Issues:

Carers ACT is the only association solely responsible for Carers in the Territory – with a growing membership base of almost 2,000 family Carers. Caring situations are diverse, each with a range of complex needs that can change significantly across the time of the caring role. Situations can be vastly different for each Carer, from someone caring for an ageing parent, to a partner living with the intensity of palliative care, to a child caring for a parent with mental illness, or a bereaved Carer facing a situation of grief, loss and re-building their own life at the end of the caring role. Our challenge is to understand both the variety and the commonality of Carers issues and unmet needs, to understand the depth of individual experience, while also assessing the ‘big picture’, and assisting the voices of Carers to reach the ears of government and of the wider community.

Without formalizing the role of Carers ACT as the peak body for Carers, the ACT Government will run the risk of a multitude of smaller Carer advocacy and peak body groups forming for specific care needs such as Mental Illness, Disability and a range of chronic illnesses. Carers ACT recognizes that it is simpler and less costly for the ACT Government to deal primarily with a single Carer group which is already committed to building and maintaining individual, group and service provider networks across the sector, and which can act as an information clearinghouse to ensure fair and effective representation on all issues related to Carers.

National and International Alliances:

Carers ACT is also actively engaged with the network of Carers Associations across Australia and contributes to the development of national policy to lead change at a Federal level through Carers Australia. Carers Associations across Australia are the peak bodies for Carers in each state or territory, and each is actively involved in policy, advocacy and representation roles within their region. However, the ACT is one of the few remaining Carer Associations in Australia which does not yet receive formal recognition of its advocacy and policy work by state/territory government through recurrent funding.

Current Shortfall:

All funding received by Carers ACT is invested in direct service delivery. Currently over 85% of funding is in direct service provision, such as paying for program workers, purchasing respite solutions from service providers, and developing Carer resource materials. The remaining budget supports a management team overseeing issues such as quality procedures, evaluation and reporting to funding providers, as well as fulfilling our governance and legal

requirements. Infrastructure costs have a growing impact on our annual budget, including a current annual cost of \$190,000 in rent for premises. Consumable expenses are also growing, especially as the recent increases in petrol prices are now causing an inflationary flow-on in the purchase of all other goods and services. These additional expenses are forcing a severe rationalization across all areas of our budget, and any unfunded work is facing the risk of restriction or elimination, which is highly regrettable given the increasing sector need for expert analysis and policy development.

Our past unfunded peak body activities have included a wide range of advice, representation, research and policy submissions. Carers ACT is regularly asked by the ACT and Australian Governments and other peak organizations to respond to issues affecting family Carers or to undertake research utilizing our large membership base. We are regularly asked to provide statistics and advice around unmet needs of Carers in the ACT community. Each comment or submission or piece of research data requires an investment of time and resources to ensure that the information is properly researched and fairly representative of Carer views and needs.

Representation/Advisory Role

Carers ACT invests considerable time in participating in ACT government reference and advisory groups. For example, in recent years, Carers ACT played a pivotal role in the development of the ACT Government's *Caring for Carers Policy*. Future activity will include implementing and guiding non-legislative reform resulting from the *Carer Legislation Amendment Act 2006* to better meet the needs of the Territory's Carers. Carers ACT also participates across the service provider sector in numerous network activities, contributing to the improvement of professional awareness and understanding of caring issues. It is of significant concern that all of these activities of critical need are taking increasing amounts of staff time and resources at a time when there is also an escalating demand for core program delivery across the Territory.

Carers ACT already has an informal Carer Reference Group comprised of Carers from a range of caring situations. The formalization and expansion of this group would greatly benefit the Territory. It is proposed that, subject to funding, a Territory Carer Reference Network be established. The Network would be comprised of Carers from a diverse range of situations and backgrounds, including representation from Indigenous and CALD Carers. The Network would also have provision for representation from key ACT stakeholder groups, such as the ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, ACT Health and other service providers. Carers ACT would welcome the opportunity to administer the Network as it would provide for a streamlined and cohesive means of feedback and reference of Carers issues specific to the Territory, while also increasing opportunities for building sector communication pathways and awareness.

Recommendation: That a *Territory Carer Reference Network* be formalized to provide expert advice and inform policy development on Carer issues in the ACT. Funding for Secretariate Support: \$30,000 per annum.

Advocacy continues to be an area of growing need, both systematic and on an individual basis. Limited funding is currently received for individual advocacy from the Australian Government, however, this is highly inadequate to meet the identified urgent need for assistance. Carers already carry significant stress loads which have been proven to negatively impact on wellbeing over the longer term. They lack the time, the energy, and sometimes even the skills to be effective self-advocates when confronted with complex issues or problems and when navigating the maze of health and social services on behalf of their cared for person. When things go wrong, many simply give up and 'drop out' of the system. Failure to achieve adequate support may lead to a total breakdown of the care relationship, leading to an otherwise preventable placement in permanent residential care, and, in the worst cases, the Carers themselves may then become dependent on others for care.

Systemic advocacy requires a major investment of time and expertise to adequately address the current and future needs of the ACT Carer population. The development of good policy is dependant upon identifying an accurate picture of Carer needs, understanding gaps in existing service delivery, sourcing national and international research where needed, and writing papers or submissions to government to inform the development of long term sustainable solutions. Carers ACT has been fortunate to attract staff in recent years with currently under-utilized skills and experience in advocacy and research. The Association now has the potential to develop and implement quality models and programs for sustainable Carer support which will provide long-term benefits to all Territorians faced with the challenge of an ageing population.

Sector Education

The ACT Government's *Caring for Carers Policy Action Plan* recognized the need for systemic change in the health system to recognize and include the Carer. Carers ACT managed the *Carer Information and Training Project* through funding received from the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services as part of the *Caring for Carers in the ACT- a plan for action (Action Plan)*. The report from this project (previously submitted to ACT Government in April 2006) clearly identified the existence of significant information gaps on Carer issues and supports available in the ACT, and outlined the need for a basic, efficient and long-term strategy to educate both service providers and Carers on issues of health and wellbeing.

Carers ACT seeks recurrent funding from the ACT government to tackle three key areas of need:

1. Carer Policy and Representation

2. Individual and Systemic Advocacy for Carers (across all care situations including mental illness)
3. Sector development (to educate the medical and allied health professions about the benefits and cost savings of including the Carer in the development and implementation of the care plan)

Year	Area of Need	What we will achieve:	Resources Needed
2008-2011 Recurrent Funding	Policy/Representation	1. Delivery of formal, quality advice to Government. 2. Provide secretariat services to the new ACT Carer Advisory Council in driving non legislative reform and providing input to a new ACT Carers Action Plan. 3. Provide leadership to the community sector and ACT Government in delivering sound advice on Carer issues at formal and informal committees, workshops and forums.	1.5 Policy Advisory positions @ \$120k including on-costs per annum – recurrent. Secretariat Services \$40k (<i>as requested in recommendation 2</i>) Honorarium Fee for Council members \$30k per annum.
2008-2011 Recurrent Funding	Individual & Systemic Advocacy	1. Support family Carers in individual advocacy issues & report against outcomes achieved.	1 position @ \$80k inc on-costs

		<p>2. Work with Carers to develop systemic advocacy needs.</p> <p>3. Work with ACT Government to determine how Carer needs can be addressed.</p>	
<p>2009-2012 Recurrent Funding</p>	<p>Sector Development – educating the system on benefits of Carer Inclusiveness</p>	<p>1. Conduct a training needs analysis of the sector in relation to Carer issues and inclusive practice.</p> <p>2. Develop an ongoing education program to the sector in Carer inclusive practice.</p> <p>3. Deliver a sector education program in communicating new ACT Carer Action Plan and non-legislative reforms.</p>	<p>1 position initially with extra .5FTE in 2011 for roll out of new ACT Carer Plan (70k in 2009, then 100k from 2011, inc. salary on-costs).</p> <p>\$75k Training Needs Analysis in 2009.</p> <p>\$70k curriculum development in 2010.</p>

RECOMMENDATION:

The ACT Government fund Carers ACT as a peak body on a recurrent basis of \$230,000 in year one, \$375,000 in year two, \$370,000 in year three, then \$330,000 per annum from year four onwards.

6. Building the Capacity of the Community Sector Workforce

Workforce participation is already a critical issue facing all sectors of the Territory. The ability to attract and retain skilled and knowledgeable staff is a challenge for many employers. This issue has two critical flow-on effects for Carers: firstly, that staff shortages are already limiting the range of services and programs offered to Carers; and secondly, that Carers have the opportunity to engage as a participant in the workforce if desired.

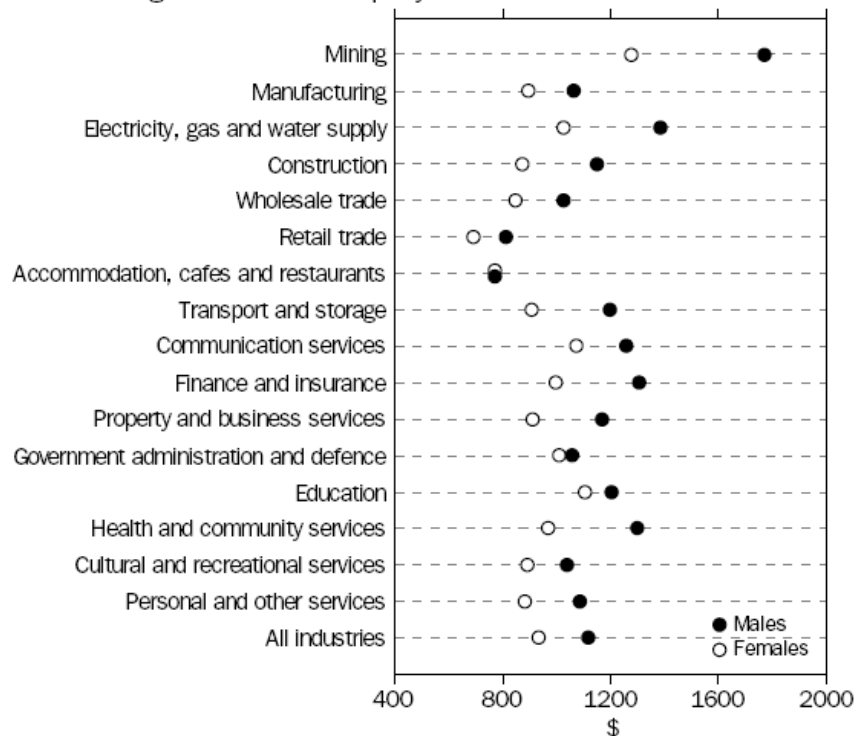
The *Canberra Social Plan: Progress Report (June 2007, p.25)* states

Evidence shows that one of the best ways to maintain a cohesive, strong and safe community is through creating a climate where individuals have the opportunity to engage in satisfying, well-rewarded work, and have access to lifelong learning and cultural and sporting facilities.

The ACT Government's campaign to address key industry shortages is to be commended. However, the community sector is already experiencing perhaps the worst shortages ever seen. Wages and conditions in the sector are generally poor and do little to attract people to the care sector.

As this graph from the ABS *Employee Earnings and Hours (6306.0)* illustrates:

AVERAGE WEEKLY TOTAL CASH EARNINGS (a), Industry—Full-time non-managerial adult employees



(a) Comprises regular wages and salaries in cash, including amounts salary sacrificed. See paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Explanatory Notes.

Government funding for community programs is limited and community organizations face difficulty, as pay rates and conditions in the Australian Public Service for equivalent positions are impossible to compete with. Inflationary factors in consumable costs, caused by the drought and petrol prices, are creating further pressure on already tight program budgets. Although governments make funding available to provide services to those in need, organizations such as Carers ACT cannot broker these services as service providers are unable to provide staff to deliver the services to meet the need.

The ACT needs to lead change in making the sector more attractive to attract and retain staff. While many employment issues such as taxation and superannuation are in the Federal domain or the subject of workplace agreements, Carers ACT requests that the ACT Government explore other options for making the Community Services Sector a more attractive employment option, for example, discount parking vouchers for non-profit workers.

Increasing the available workforce by better utilizing the capacity of existing residents to participate in the workforce will also benefit the entire Territory. Many Carers wish to work on a part-time or full-time basis, but find it difficult to re-enter the workforce without support for their ongoing care needs. Carers who have suffered a bereavement often need intensive or longer term support to facilitate their adjustment back into a non-Carer role. Carers ACT proposes that unpaid Carers who wish to return to the workforce can be provided with reskilling and training.

Solutions to achieve sustainable workforce participation rates for Carers will also be assisted by the funding of policy workers at Carers ACT, as this is already an area of identified need for Carers in the ACT.

Recommendation: That the ACT Government provide a leadership role in developing a transition assistance scheme for re-skilling Carers in the ACT.

7. Young Carers – the Hidden Generation

Children and young people under 26 years of age make a significant contribution to home based support of family members who have a disability, chronic condition, mental illness or are frail aged.

Currently there are a number of Young Carer programs available in the Territory delivered by a range of community and government agencies - all with very limited funding or resources attached. The primary focus of such programs relate to specific age groups (10-18 years) and limited respite and or case management hours.

Carers ACT receives recurrent funding from the Australian Government's Department of Families, Communities and Indigenous Affairs of around \$90k per annum over three years. The purpose of this funding is to provide information and respite to young Carers to minimise the risk of them leaving school prematurely. While it is excellent that the Commonwealth now recognises the valuable role young Carers play, the funding guidelines enable us to provide packages of no more than two weeks respite per young Carer per annum. This makes it difficult to deliver real outcomes as many young Carers need more than short term, emergency respite to motivate them to catch up on school work and finish schooling.

This funding enables us to employ only a part time coordinator as the majority of the funds are used in brokering direct respite services and support for young Carers. This again limits our ability to make real impact on young Carers who need more one-on-one support.

We propose that the ACT Government fund a second full time Coordinator to provide intensive support and case management for young Carers

While the ACT government already provides some support to young Carers via CYCLOPS our proposal will complement existing services and more adequately address the real needs of young Carers. Moreover, it will build the capacity of community organisations trying to support the unmet need of young Carers in the ACT.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the ACT Government fund the implementation of a Young Carer Case Management position on a recurrent basis of \$80,000 per annum, over three years.

8. References

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