



Annual Review 2020-2021



MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR

**CARERS**



# A Message from Sue Peden and Callum Ingram

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The 2020-21 year has seen Carers Victoria continue its journey of change while adapting to multiple lockdowns and the impacts of the pandemic on both carers and staff.

In responding to the pandemic, our focus was on a combination of delivering support and empowering unpaid carers across Victoria during a period when carers continued to experience significant stress and caring responsibilities due to COVID-19. Carers have been doing a tremendous job throughout this challenging time, not only maintaining their caring role, but often going above and beyond for those they care for. Carers Victoria stepped up to the challenge as vaccination ambassadors offering additional supports to carers through timely information, hosting factual events, and sharing resources to enable carers to make informed choices.

One of our core values is to mark and celebrate our efforts, and this year offered many opportunities to do that. We delivered on several key initiatives with our partners, providing services to carers in Western Metropolitan Melbourne via the Support for Carers Program and Carer Gateway. We also learnt about the risks associated with social isolation and the importance of co-design in service delivery through our partnership initiatives with Neighbourhood Houses Victoria and the Primary Health Network. As you continue to read this year's report, you will notice we have highlighted our impacts by aligning them to our C.A.R.E.R values.

During the reporting year we also progressed work towards our new strategic plan for 2021-24 and announced Judith Abbott as the new CEO of Carers Victoria. Judith brings a valuable

combination of skills and attributes alongside a strong commitment to our mission.

As this report sets out, Carers Victoria continues to provide a combination of support, education, and events for its members alongside its program of service development, capacity building, and policy and advocacy.

We are proud of the work we have done for and with carers, often in partnership with a diverse range of other organisations. As this report highlights, collaboration is at the core of how we work. We also formally acknowledge the continued financial support of both the Victorian and Australian Governments and their willingness to engage and work with us.

Good leadership and governance are essential to the success of Carers Victoria, so we thank all our directors and others who participated in Board Committees over the

reporting period. These are voluntary roles but ones that are crucial to our organisation. Thank you.

All of this is not possible without the commitment, enthusiasm and expertise of our Carers Victoria team and we thank each and every one of them for their continued flexibility and focus despite the challenges of the year.

With a new strategy, new leadership and a renewed focus and energy, there is much to look forward to in the coming year as Carers Victoria reaches its 30th anniversary. It is an exciting time, and we look forward to working with our members and supporters across Victoria and beyond to make life better for carers.



**Sue Peden AM**  
*Board Chair*  
*Carers Victoria*



**Callum Ingram**  
*Deputy Chair*  
*Carers Victoria*



**Judith Abbott**  
**CEO**  
*Carers Victoria*



# Committed to Carers and Caring

We're committed to changing the lives of carers for the better and ensuring they have a voice that is heard, included and respected. Carers and caring is at the heart of everything we do.

## Carer Services

Our Carer Services are delivered by a multidisciplinary team of professionals working to understand and fulfill the practical and emotional needs of carers. Our suite of services includes counselling and wellbeing support, case management, navigating complex systems and exploring respite options.

This financial year, our work predominately focused on delivering service outcomes for carers in the Western Metropolitan region of Melbourne.

## Workshops

Our Education team are experts in carer issues. Carers Victoria offers a range of free workshops each month for carers covering a wide range of topics such as carer wellbeing and navigating the disability and aged care systems. Workshops also give carers an opportunity to take a break and connect with other carers.

Carers Victoria also offers workshops for service providers wishing to build their knowledge and capacity around carers' needs and experiences.

### Change in Knowledge:

We ask all participants to rate their knowledge of the workshop topic before and after the workshop.

**On average, participant knowledge increased by 29% per workshop.**



To find out what workshops are coming up, visit our website [www.carersvictoria.org.au/whatson](http://www.carersvictoria.org.au/whatson)



## Members Day Melbourne Zoo

Carers Victoria held a Members Day Out on 13 March at Melbourne Zoo for members and their families, with 500 people attending. The event included a free ticket to the zoo, lunch pack and face painting for kids. The day out gave carers a chance to have a fun day with their family, meet other carers and learn more about carer supports in their area from Carers Victoria staff.



*The whole day was amazing. It was great to meet the staff at Carers Victoria who we have been speaking with regularly over the past 12 months. The zoo was wonderful. We had a great day and enjoyed everything. Cath - carer*





## Events

Carers Victoria delivers events for our members and supporters across the state. Over the past year, the majority of these were delivered online due to COVID-19 restrictions.

“  
*The event was a reminder to take care of ourselves and recognise the valuable work we do.*  
 Amir - carer  
 ”

## Sector Leadership and Innovation

Carers Victoria’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a major focus for the Sector Leadership and Innovation team in 2020-2021. We have been working with Government to ensure carers needs are considered in the pandemic response and building capacity within the sector to meet the changing needs of carers.

Carers Victoria lobbied Government to ensure carers were included in phase 1B of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. We are a pro-vaccination organisation, and have been using our communications channels to give carers information on when, where and how they, and the people they care for, can get vaccinated.

Building on insights from the Support for Carers Program network, Carers Victoria developed a Sector Seminar Series to improve knowledge and capacity in the delivery of carer services. These seminars address current issues for carer services in Victoria and provide opportunity for the sharing of ideas between professionals and volunteers working in the carer sector.

## Our carers



2,494

Received support services

## Over 1,500

Counselling sessions

50%

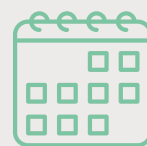
Care for someone over 60

14%

Care for someone with dementia

35%

Care for someone with disability



557

Workshop and Events

12,050

Participants



# Able to Build and Strengthen Community

We bring people together and actively seek opportunities to learn, share, help and partner with our team, members, supporters, carers and partners. We are strengthened by our communities.

## Carers Victoria Membership

Carers Victoria expanded its membership program in the past year and has seen significant growth over this period. Our membership base is made up of carers, former carers and supporters.

We strengthened our value proposition with:

- › Exclusive invitations to events including our popular Mingle events, carer workshops and programs specifically designed for carers.
- › Championing for real change through consultations, focus groups and research.
- › Up-to-date information through our monthly eBulletin 'The Voice' jam-packed with important carer issues, events and stories.
- › Special member offers.
- › Free sign up for individuals.

## Community of Practice

Carers Victoria has worked with carer support group facilitators over many years in one-off projects over short periods. There was an identified need to provide on-going support for facilitators in a structured capacity, and as a result the Community of Practice (CoP) project was launched at the end of 2020. As a result, groups were formed in rural, regional and Metropolitan Melbourne for volunteers and professionals.

Group sessions covered practical topics to support volunteers and professionals working with carer support groups.

*I have found the sessions I've attended to be of great value. It helps us to map out areas we could improve on to support our carers.*  
*Julie - carer*

## Brunch and Walking Groups for Carers in Western Metro

In 2020-2021, Carers Victoria hosted brunch and walking groups for carers living in the areas of Werribee, Hobson's Bay, Brimbank, Moonee Valley and Caroline Springs. These groups give carers the opportunity to meet other carers, get some light exercise and enjoy a break.

While many of these sessions had to be cancelled due to ongoing lockdown restrictions, a total of **75 carers** enjoyed the sessions in 2020-2021.

*These outings are one of the most enjoyable activities for me. I am extremely grateful and appreciative of these monthly meetings.*  
*Jeff - carer*



43%

Membership increase in 2020-2021



90

Facilitators attended Community of Practice meetings



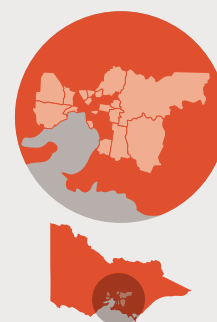
75

Carers participated in brunch and walking groups



Over 68

'Carer Friendly' Neighbourhood Houses



### Carer Friendly Neighbourhood Houses Project

This year, Carers Victoria partnered with Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, Municipal Association of Victoria and local councils to support and establish community resource centres for carers in local, easily accessible spaces. Based on the Mildura Carers Hub Blueprint, the Carer Friendly Hubs provide opportunities for carers to connect and live healthier and more active lives.

At their local Carer Friendly Hubs, carers can:

- › Meet in welcoming and warm spaces;
- › Find information about supports and services that exist for carers;
- › Connect with other people in their local community;
- › Participate in local programs and activities;
- › Enjoy dedicated spaces for support group meetings;

- › Connect to programs and pathways specifically for carers.

There are now over 68 'Carer Friendly' Neighbourhood Houses spanning Metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, with more and more added each week.





# Respectful and United in Our Differences

**We value every individual regardless of their life experience and we speak up and stand up when we see disrespect and discrimination in action. We ensure all people are heard and included.**

This year we celebrated two key milestones for equity and inclusion at Carers Victoria:

- › The endorsement of our Reconciliation Action Plan by Reconciliation Australia, and
- › Achieving Rainbow Tick accreditation.

Our internal Equity and Inclusion Committee meets regularly to ensure our equity and inclusion workplan is carried out, and all staff receive appropriate training in working with diverse communities. Our aim is to ensure Carers Victoria is inclusive for all staff, carers and stakeholders.

Carers Victoria is engaged with external organisations such as the Diversity Council of Australia to help us develop robust frameworks and inform our work.

## Rainbow Tick Accreditation

Carers Victoria is proud to be a Rainbow Tick accredited organisation.

This national accreditation demonstrates our commitment to safe and inclusive practices for LGBTI consumers and staff. LGBTIQA+ people come from a range of backgrounds, faiths, occupations, locations, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and family types. Under the rainbow umbrella there are many LGBTIQA+ communities and groups who identify as queer/questioning, pansexual, asexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender diverse, intersex and other identities.

Carers Victoria seeks to provide support specific to individual carer needs and acknowledges that although people in LGBTIQA+ care relationships face many of the same joys and pressures as any other carer, the

LGBTIQA+ community has unique needs. LGBTIQA+ people may experience specific challenges related to invisibility, discrimination and exclusion. A lack of recognition of a person's experience, sexuality, gender identity or care relationship can add stress to carers in already challenging circumstances.

Many LGBTIQA+ carers may be isolated from others in their communities by distance, social isolation, financial disadvantage, stigma and demands related to their role. At Carers Victoria, our aim is to provide inclusive and affirming services which value, celebrate and support LGBTIQA+ carers and carers of LGBTIQA+ people.







## Reconciliation Action Plan

In May 2021, Carers Victoria launched our first Reconciliation Action Plan: Reflect.

Carers Victoria acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more likely to have a caring role than non-Aboriginal Victorians. We are committed to reconciliation, supporting and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through our core business.

While we have worked with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and businesses over many years, our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is our first coordinated, whole-of-organisation approach to reconciliation. It shows our commitment to concrete, measurable actions.

We celebrated this milestone with a staff event at Footscray Community Arts Centre. Staff heard stories and took part in an interactive performance from Nartarsha Bamblett and heard from local Aboriginal artist Mandi Barton (Biyala B), who produced the cover art for our RAP. We then enjoyed morning tea by local Indigenous catering business Mabu Mabu.



To find out more about what our RAP entails, visit [www.carersvictoria.org.au/equityinclusion](http://www.carersvictoria.org.au/equityinclusion)



## Launched

Reconciliation Action Plan: Reflect



## Accreditation

Rainbow Tick



96%

of staff have completed Diversity in the Workplace Training



# Empower Curious and Creative Pioneers

To support and benefit carers we need to remain inquisitive and creative.

Carers Victoria forms partnerships with carers, service providers and philanthropists to allow us to research, pilot and deliver innovative programs that directly meet the needs of carers.



## Carer Retreat Program

The Carer Retreat Program is an opportunity for carers to get away from their day-to-day responsibilities and enjoy a luxury retreat in one of six destinations. Carers nominated for the program are offered an all-inclusive carer retreat including two nights' accommodation, breakfast, dinner and spa treatments.

*"I have never been gifted anything like this before. The retreat made me feel acknowledged and VISIBLE. I was able to laugh, exhale and reconnect with my partner during the retreat. We had so many adventures - gentle walks, laughs, wonderful food and great experiences."*  
*Marie - carer*

## Young Carer Scholarship Program

Carers Victoria's Young Carer Scholarship Program gives young carers attending secondary school the opportunity to be acknowledged for their contributions to their family and the community and to participate in school or community based activities that enhance their skills, educational achievements and abilities, or that help them to participate more fully in their community.

Scholarships of up to \$500 are awarded to successful applicants.

*"The Young Carer Scholarship made a difference to me because rather than feeling alone and worried about taking care of my family, it allowed me to realise there's a lot of other people going through a similar situation."*  
*Kristy - young carer*



## Thank You

Carers Victoria would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for supporting us in these programs.

- › Rotary Club of Mount Eliza
- › City of Hume
- › City of Kingston

We acknowledge the support of:

- › Sue Fincham
- › Stephen Alomes
- › Pavla Pilcova

We would like to thank our research partners for this financial year:

- › Deakin University (*Estimating the value of informal care provided to people with dementia in Australia*);

- › Monash University (*Supporting carers' navigation of older adults' care transitions to the community: carers' perspectives*);
- › Monash University and the Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration (*EMBRACE - the impact of visitor restrictions to residential aged care homes on care partners during the COVID-19 pandemic*);
- › National Ageing Research Institute (*Creative Caring: Promoting a balanced view of caring for someone with dementia*);
- › National Ageing Research Institute (*Perceptions of Quality Residential Aged Care and COVID-19*).



78

Young Carer scholarships awarded in 2020-2021 to the value of \$40,000

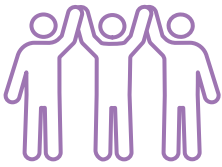
Over 71,600

Young people in Victoria are believed to have significant care responsibilities



64

Retreats gifted to nominated carers in 2020-2021 to the value of approximately \$100,000



# Responsible for Our Actions, We Celebrate Success

We take responsibility for our actions and share our successes.

Carers Victoria continued to raise the profile of Victorian carers in 2020-2021. We harnessed our online platforms to bring carers regular and engaging online events, told carer stories and delivered up-to-date information on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

## Carers Victoria's Truly Incredible Care Campaign wins Gold at the PR Asia Awards

In June, Carers Victoria's statewide digital campaign "Truly Incredible Care" won Gold at the PR Asia Awards in the cause related 'Public Awareness' category. The awards celebrate the most outstanding, inspired and successful campaigns in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Truly Incredible Care campaign launched statewide on 28 September to 8 November 2020, coinciding with National Carers Week. The aim of the campaign is

to raise awareness about the enormous contribution that carers make to our community, thank them for the incredible care they provide and create a movement of people who care deeply about unpaid carers. The campaign received over 1 million video views and had a total PR reach of 48 million people via 624 pieces of coverage across print, online, TV and social media.

Carers Victoria is proud of this achievement and would like to thank the three wonderful carers and their families who featured in the campaign.

## Carers and the COVID-19 Vaccine: What you need to know

On Thursday 27 May, we hosted a special edition of Conversations with Carers Victoria, 'Carers and the COVID-19 Vaccine: What you need to know' with special guest Professor Steve Trumble, Head of Medical Education at the University of

Melbourne Medical School. The webinar was delivered as part of our Department of Health grant "Carers Victoria Building Community Confidence - COVID-19 Vaccination Roll Out".

Carers were able to ask questions when registering and tune in to hear their questions answered live by Professor Trumble. Over 500 carers watched the webinar with 87% saying they felt more confident to receive the vaccine and 88% said it improved their understanding of the vaccine.

## Carer Wellbeing and Connection Program

Carers Victoria, supported by North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network, developed a four-week online program called the Carer Wellbeing and Connection Program. This program was co-designed with carers, to help them build confidence and strength to address some of these challenges.



truly  
incredible  
carers



Our online audience grew by

39.8%

LinkedIn audience

30%

Social Media  
(combined total of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram)

6.3%

eBulletin "The Voice"



Carer Wellbeing & Connection Program

25

Groups

84%

Participants completed the program



22

Groups

82%

Participants completed the program

Online therapeutic group sessions were held each week for carers to promote a deeper understanding of connectedness and personal wellbeing. The sessions were facilitated by an experienced mental health professional.

Initial findings from clinical evaluation of the program show participants experienced reduced psychological distress and increased social connectedness. Final findings will be available in early 2022.

“ It was a great program to assist carers especially in current situations... I am so pleased to be in this group with such a sense of inclusiveness and warm feeling in the bottom of heart.  
Lisa - participant in the Carer Wellbeing and Connection Program ”

### Mind the Step

Mind the Step is a low intensity early intervention support program run by Carers Victoria and funded by the Western Victorian Primary Health Network to support carers to recognise emerging mental health issues and develop skill and improve access to supports to better manage these. The program targeted carers in Western Victoria who felt they would benefit from building their personal resilience and connecting with others in similar situations.

**Key findings** from the evaluation of the 2020-2021 program **identified improvements in participants' mental health literacy (86%) and peer connections (97%).**



# Submissions and Financials

## Submissions

Carers Victoria made four formal submissions in 2020-2021, including submissions in response to:

- › Victorian Whole of Government LGBTIQ Strategy (July 2020)
- › Beyond the Rhetoric of Choice and Control: Building Fairness and Equity into the NDIS (September 2020)
- › Victorian Youth Strategy (December 2020)

- › Parliamentary Inquiry into the Victorian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic (December 2020)

We also developed a summary analysis of the Final Report from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System which prompted media attention within the sector.



To download our recent policy submissions, visit [www.carersvictoria.org.au/submissions](http://www.carersvictoria.org.au/submissions)





11

Advisory groups attended

5

Formal research partnerships

6

Sector seminars delivered

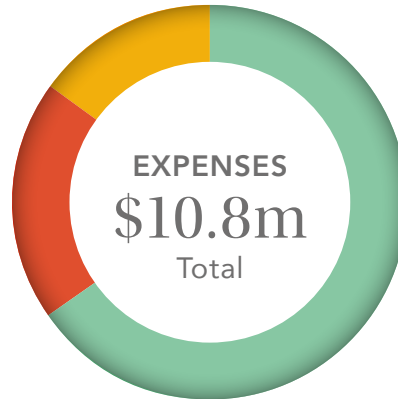
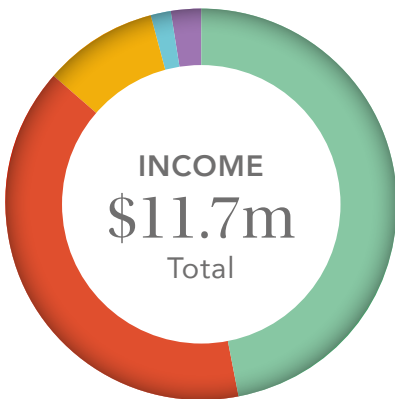
40

Secondary consultations provided to professionals and organisations

## Financials

Our funding for 2020-21 was primarily made up of federal and state funding, in addition to funding sourced through project grants, donations and sponsorships. A breakdown of this funding can be found below.

All of our results and reporting was audited following the close of the financial year on 30 June 2021.



- **\$5.5m**  
State Government Grants
- **\$4.6m**  
Federal Government Grants
- **\$1.1m**  
Projects
- **\$175k**  
Donations/Sponsorships
- **\$280k**  
Other Income

- **\$7m**  
Staffing Costs
- **\$2.1m**  
Brokerage
- **\$1.7m**  
Other Expenditure

Net Operating Result \$832k



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ABN 12 533 636 427 ACN 143 579 257



Carers Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation, and pays our respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the continuing connection to land and waters. Sovereignty was never ceded.

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