



Carers VIC
Australia



MAKING CARERS MORE VISIBLE

ANNUAL REVIEW 2021-22





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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

In 2021–22, Carers Victoria continued adapting its approach to meet the changing needs of carers across the state, as well as changes in its operating environment.

Repeated lockdowns took a serious toll on Victoria’s carers, shaping our **focus to better understand those impacts and advocate for the supports that carers needed both then and as we move towards COVID normal**. Our carer survey provided valuable evidence for funders and media engagement, affording us new opportunities to tell the myriad stories of carers, who they are, and what they need to sustain their caring roles.

Over the year, we **combined flexible models of service delivery with a return to some face-to-face events**. Carers and Carers Victoria staff alike were thrilled to reconnect with each other, with government, and with other decision-makers and influencers. Alongside this, 30 carers went on funded retreats for a well-earned break thanks to the generous support of a private sponsor.

In 2021, we also finalised a **new four-year strategic plan** with a focus on four key pillars: Influence, Innovation, Intelligence and Independence.

Alongside our continued service delivery, sector development, education and events programs, we expanded our focus to include:

- › **Engaging with the corporate sector** to improve awareness and support for carers in the workplace and the broader community
- › **Establishing a Knowledge Centre** which will, over time, collect and analyse data about the Victorian carer population and its needs
- › **Strengthening our policy and advocacy efforts** with our Care for Victorians policy platform, released in April 2022
- › **Growing our membership base** by over 50 percent over the year
- › Building and launching **new models of support for carers**, such as our Carer Advisory Service pilot
- › **Enhancing the capacity of other funded organisations** that engage with carers across the state, including establishment of statewide networks for funded agencies
- › Exploring new approaches to supporting carers who wish to **re-enter paid employment and/or training**.



Sue Peden AM, Board Chair, Carers Victoria



Judith Abbott, CEO, Carers Victoria

Sound financial management and good governance supported the organisation's efficient operation, and the continued financial support of governments, donors, partners, and pro bono service providers allowed us to expand our impact.

We are particularly appreciative of the substantial funding provided by the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Victorian Department of Health and the Australian Department of Health.

It does, however, remain a period of significant change as government reforms continue at both state and federal levels, affecting current and future funding opportunities. **Carers Victoria will continue to advocate for service, funding, and policy reforms in the areas that matter most to carers.**

All of this would not be possible without the continued commitment, enthusiasm, and expertise of the community we work with, and we thank Victoria's carers for the time they have taken to connect with and advise us.

We also recognise and thank the Carers Victoria staff, our funders, supporters and donors, directors and committee members, and everyone else who has contributed to making carers more visible in the 2021–22 year.

Sue Peden AM
Board Chair, Carers Victoria

Judith Abbott
CEO, Carers Victoria

Carers Victoria will continue to advocate for service, funding, and policy reforms in the areas that matter most to carers.

OUR IMPACT

Carers Victoria continued to deliver for Victorian carers, despite the ongoing

Engaging with carers and supporters



Supporting and connecting Victorian carers

HOURS OF SUPPORT



38,000 hours

of support delivered to carers

CARER CONTACT GROWTH



2,300

carer contacts to the Carer Advisory Service pilot program

WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING



12,300 hours

of workshops and training delivered

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



37 events

produced and delivered, equating to

1 every 10 days
(approx)

ng impacts of the pandemic.

Building networks and connections across Victoria

CARER FRIENDLY PLACES



76

Neighbourhood Houses completed **Carer Friendly Places** training

CONNECTING SERVICES TO BETTER SUPPORT CARERS



93%

of funded **Support for Carers Program** providers participated in statewide network activities

A voice for carers



2022 Carers Victoria Policy Platform Care for Victorians released



3 Major submissions made to government



1,130 respondents to COVID Carer Survey



15 Carer stories and videos produced and published

OUR WORK

Supporting Carers

While the impacts of the pandemic were significant for both carers and our own staff, Carers Victoria was pleased to continue offering a combination of virtual and face-to-face support for carers in Melbourne's West, funded mainly through the Victorian Support for Carers Program and the Australian Government's Community Home Support Program. This funding allowed us to work with carers to explore their needs and connect them to a diverse range of services including respite, health and wellbeing supports and other activities that help support them in their caring role.

Alongside this, we continued to innovate and evolve our supports for carers in line with their feedback. In the reporting period, this included:

- › piloting a Carer Advisory Service, which provided advice to over 2,000 carers in its first 6 months of operation
- › delivering a DFFH-funded Vaccination Assistance Program
- › providing laptops and tablets to 2,100 carers in Western Metropolitan Melbourne to help keep them connected
- › facilitating the InTouch program, an online social connectedness program delivered to more than 70 carers in Melbourne's North West.





OUR WORK

Connection and Engagement

Carers Victoria events provided entertainment, fun, acknowledgement, and a well-deserved break for many carers.

Events for Carers

Funded events for carers included a family day at Melbourne Zoo attended by over 250 people and Mingles events held in 8 locations across Victoria, which were attended by over 800 carers.

“The value of the entry to the zoo and fully catered lunch is not something my family would ordinarily be able to afford. On the way home my husband and I actually said to each other that was the best day as a family we have EVER had. The Carers Victoria staff were so lovely.”

- Melbourne Zoo event attendee, 2022



“I got to forget about my worries for a couple of hours and truly enjoy myself.” - Mingle event attendee, 2022



Carer Retreat Program

Our 30 Getaways campaign offered a chance for new members, and those who referred a new member, to win one of 30 luxury two-night carer getaways. The winners were grateful for the relaxation, pampering and acknowledgment, which was generously sponsored by an anonymous donor. Without the support of our donors, these events would not be possible.

Young Carer Scholarship Program

In 2022, Carers Victoria celebrated 15 years of the Young Carer Scholarship Program and proudly awarded 81 Young Carer Scholarships, which helped them with the costs of school and community-based activities. Funded by the generous support of donors, there have now been a total of 2,031 young carer scholarships allocated over the past 15 years.

“Things for my sister usually come first and sometimes that makes things hard for me. I know I will continue to care for my sister as we get older too. It would feel good to get a scholarship that acknowledges my role. It would help me by giving me an activity... to look forward to every week where I get to do something I want to do first. It would be amazing!”

– Young carer, aged 12

OUR WORK

Advocating for Change

Throughout 2021–22, Carers Victoria continued to proactively advocate for policy, funding and program change to improve carers' lives.

This included making submissions to Victorian Government reviews and inquiries, including:

- › A written submission to the [Disability Inclusion Act 2006 review](#), where we advocated for formal recognition of carers in legislation and a range of practical changes to ensure they were actively involved in key planning processes. We also participated in advisory processes to shape some of the associated work.
- › A written submission to the [Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Support Needs for Older Victorians from Migrant and Refugee Backgrounds](#), and attendance at a public hearing, where we highlighted the critical gaps in current data for carers from such backgrounds and the need to consider more nuanced and targeted approaches to identifying and supporting the needs of carers in those communities. This was done through a partnership with the National Ageing Research Institute, Multicultural Centre for Women's Health and Seniors Rights Victoria.

Carers Victoria also advocated for carers on a range of national issues spanning areas such as carers of NDIS participants, capacity to maintain employment, publicly reporting Carer Gateway data and ensuring carers are a priority group to access rapid antigen tests. We were also pleased to support the development of the **Caring Costs Us report**, which highlights the significant levels of financial disadvantage experienced by some carers because of the care they provide. This was an issue that is an agreed area of national focus, which will be a high priority of advocacy for all state and territory carers organisations over the coming period.

In April 2022, we also released our [2022 policy platform, Care for Victorians](#). Drawing on what carers have told us, it identified five key areas where the Victorian Government can make a real difference in the lives of carers and served as a precursor to our pre-election campaign later in the year.



CEO Judith Abbott and Board Chair Sue Peden AM meeting with the Hon. Anthony Carbines, then Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers and the Parliamentary Secretary Mr Josh Bull (on screen).

Education and Capacity Building

Our education team continued to provide a diverse program of education and training related to caring and supporting people in caring roles.

Education

Over 400 sessions were delivered either online or in person across Victoria, with over 4,000 participants, 90 percent of whom were carers. We were pleased to see a high level of satisfaction among participants, with 88 percent reporting they were very satisfied.

The 5 most popular carer topics were:

1. Support Services for Carers
2. Caring for Yourself
3. Write your Cares Away
4. I Feel so Guilty
5. NDIS Introduction for Carers

The 3 most popular topics for organisations/people working with carers were:

1. Support Services and Referral Pathways for Carers
2. Understanding the Carer Experience
3. Engaging Effectively with Carers

400

education sessions

4,000

participants



88%

very satisfied

+CASE STUDY:

Writing with Purpose Program

From May to June 2022, Carers Victoria ran a three-part program, **Writing with Purpose**.

The program aimed to build carers' skills, knowledge, and confidence to write their story for self-care, to improve social connection and to advocate structural change.

Participants were supported to write a 400-word piece, provided with editing support and presented with a designed version of this story. They were also invited to submit their story for [Carers Victoria's 30 years, 30 stories campaign](#). Evaluation findings outline significant benefits to carers who participated.

OUR WORK

Projects

Community of Practice Program

Our initial Community of Practice program for facilitators of Carer Support Groups concluded in November 2021. In its first year, it had 72 active participants, which represents nearly 20 percent of all available facilitators of Carer Support Groups registered on the Carers Victoria website. The program was universally seen as a success, both by its participants and by the staff running it.

“This group is probably the biggest resource [I need to help me in my role]: it’s changed a lot of my thinking...”

– Rural/regional volunteer facilitator, 2021

Supporting Carers Locally Program

Funded by DFFH’s Supporting Carers Locally initiative, Carers Victoria successfully tailored a suite of capacity-building and networking activities for the 131 organisations that received DFFH grants to design and deliver local projects for carers.

Carers Victoria designed and provided a range of needs-based, formal training sessions, ongoing mentoring and advice, and also established ongoing collaborative networking opportunities.

Recognising and Respecting CALD Carers Project

In 2021, Carers Victoria partnered with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria to build the capacity of carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and raise their awareness of elder abuse in care relationships.

Specialist carer education was delivered to various language-based groups including Greek and two Arabic groups, and Carer Support Group Facilitator Training to their group leaders. A report on the first 12 months of the project highlighted the important work achieved by identifying hidden carers and carer groups from diverse backgrounds and building their capacity in their caring role.

“I was not aware of financial abuse. I thought it’s normal for children to use our money because they are taking care of us, mind you I wasn’t comfortable with it.”

– Program participant, 2021



Carer Employment Support Project

In November 2021, DFFH awarded Carers Victoria a Carer Employment Pathways Grant in partnership with Neighbourhood Houses Victoria and 10 Local Neighbourhood Houses with the goal of supporting 300 carers who wished to explore an employment pathway and connecting them to local community and supports.

One of many examples of success included our work with a Neighbourhood House and their local special development school. Parents who are carers were supported to access vocational education, which will in turn lead to employment opportunities.

Carer Friendly Places Program

Carers Victoria continued to work with Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, the Municipal Association of Victoria and other partners to roll out the DFFH-funded Carer Friendly Places program. This program provided carer-awareness training to both neighbourhood houses and council staff. By 30 June 2022, a total of 76 neighbourhood houses had completed the training and the training resources for councils were nearing completion.



Sector Seminar Network Series

The Sector Seminar Network Series began in May 2022 with the purpose of building the capacity of the carer support sector. Target participants were anyone working with or involved in the design and delivery of carer support services. Of the 3 sessions conducted to June 30, 85 participants attended and 61 organisations were represented. These ranged from managers to service coordinators, and from carer support group facilitators to support workers.

Information and Updates

Helping carers readily know what's happening and giving them easy access to information about a wide range of relevant topics is a core part of Carer Victoria's work.

Our website attracted 360,000 visits during the period, and we continued to see growth across all online audiences.

Significantly, our newsletter subscriber database grew by almost 50 percent, improving engagement and connection with members as well as our existing audience data.

With our 30-year anniversary in 2022, we progressed our "30 years, 30 stories" campaign and produced and published an additional 15 carer stories. To see the stories from the campaign, visit our website [here](#).

OUR WORK

Creating a Carer Knowledge Centre

As a strong voice for carers, we continue to invest in building the evidence base about carers – who they are, what they need, and what we see changing now and into the future.

In the reporting period, Carers Victoria took its first steps towards building a Knowledge Centre that will, over time, become the go-to place for evidence, data and analysis about carers. As part of this work, Carers Victoria directly supported some key surveys to build our evidence base and support our advocacy efforts, including:

- › The 2021 [Carers Victoria COVID-19 Carers Survey](#), which sought carer advice on how the pandemic had impacted them and what they needed to support a transition to COVID-normal.
- › The **2022 National Carer Wellbeing Survey**, conducted by Carers Australia to develop a deeper understanding of how carers are feeling – and how this has changed over time. More detailed results are being progressively released.
- › Carers Victoria also actively encouraged carer participation in the **2022 National Carers Survey**, which provides a strong basis for understanding the changing demographics of the carer population across the nation. More detailed results are progressively being released.

During the reporting period, we also saw the **first release of 2021 census data**. Of note was data indicating that the overall size of the Victorian carer population had grown by 22 percent over the period since the 2016 census, which is well more than the national growth of 15 percent. This has been an important input into internal modelling undertaken to estimate the future size of the carer population.



How did the pandemic affect carers?

In 2021, Carers Victoria sought carers' advice on both how the pandemic had affected carers and what they needed to transition to COVID normal. Key findings were shared with government and the community to help ensure the specific needs of carers were understood and considered.

Five high-level themes emerged from the survey results.

1. Many carers had to provide complex care that would usually be provided by trained professionals.



› **52%** provided care usually given by a medical or allied health professional during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. The impact on employment was evident, with many carers changing their employment arrangements to accommodate their caring role.



› **Nearly half (47%)** of all carers changed their employment arrangements to accommodate their care relationships during the pandemic.



› **1 in 8** left work because of having to spend more time in their care role.

3. Carer mental health and wellbeing has suffered.



› **More than half (51%)** of carers indicated that their mental health was worse or a lot worse.

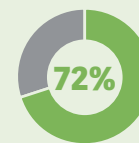


› **Over 80%** of carers reported they spent more time in their care roles over the pandemic.

4. Carers need support to reconnect in a COVID normal Victoria.



› Access to respite was a key ask.



› **72%** said they would self-impose restrictions on their activities and engagement.

5. Carers are keen to see some of the innovations introduced during the pandemic maintained.



SUPPORTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In the reporting period, Carers Victoria continued to promote diversity and inclusion across our organisation's activities.

Rainbow Tick Accreditation

Carers Victoria continued to roll out commitments made through our Rainbow Tick accreditation, hosting a series of events and activities for LGBTIQ+ carers in partnership with Queerspace.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation

We neared completion of all actions arising from our *Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan* and began engagement with local First Nations carers with a view to supporting a community-led model for such work.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

About 70 percent of the carers we support come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and we progressed a broad range of work to support these communities. Specialist carer education workshops were delivered to various language-based groups in partnership with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, and Carer Support Group facilitator training was delivered to their group leaders. We also delivered tailored InTouch sessions for Vietnamese-speaking carers.

Supporting Cultural Diversity across our Staff Group

We ran a Diversity Atlas survey of Carers Victoria staff, and the results reflected the significant cultural diversity of our own team. Respondents were born in 11 different countries and speak 26 languages. It is a point of pride that the large majority of our staff have lived experience of a carer role, with over one-third currently in such a role. Our staff reflect the community of carers that we serve.



OUR SUPPORTERS AND SPONSORS

Carers Victoria could not do its work without the significant financial support of our funders, supporters and sponsors.

We would like to thank the Victorian Department of Families Fairness and Housing, the Victorian Department of Health and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing for the significant funding they provided to Carers Victoria over the reporting period.

We also recognise the support of organisations that provided pro bono advice and/or resources over the reporting period, and in particular the pro bono assistance provided by Minter Ellison Lawyers.

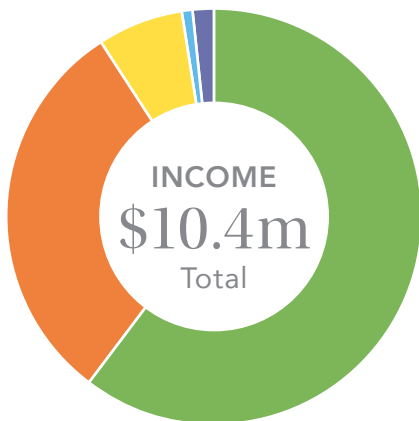
Last but by no means least, we thank both the individual donors who supported programs such as carer retreats and the organisations who sponsored our carer events. While many of our donors prefer to remain anonymous, sponsor organisations of 2021–22 events are listed following:

- › Alfred Health
- › Australian Digital Health Agency
- › Australian Multicultural Community Services
- › Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre
- › Barwon disAbility Resource Council
- › Barwon Health
- › Bendigo Health
- › Cancer Council Victoria
- › Carer Gateway
- › EACH
- › Estia Health
- › Friends for Good
- › Heart Foundation
- › HMS Collective
- › Mable
- › Mercy Health
- › Merri Health Carer Services
- › Northeast Neighbourhood House Network
- › Partners For Change (Australian Department of Health)
- › Rosewall Community Centre
- › Third Age Fitness
- › Uniting Vic Tas

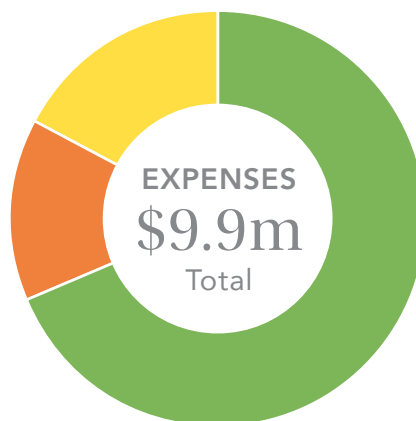


FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2021-22

Our funding for 2020-21 primarily comprised Victorian and Australian Government funding, in addition to funding sourced through project grants, donations and sponsorships. A breakdown of this funding is below, reflect the figures confirmed via external audit following the close of the financial year on 30 June 2021.



- **\$6.3m**
State Government Grants
- **\$3.2m**
Federal Government Grants
- **\$691k**
Other Grants
- **\$101k**
Donations/Sponsorships
- **\$156k**
Other Income



- **\$6.8m**
Staffing Costs
- **\$1.4m**
Brokerage
- **\$1.7m**
Other Expenditure





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