



Carers *news*

2019 Edition 1

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Voice*

Advocating for carer rights

*Social Media
Savvy*

Ways to engage online

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Message from Scott

Welcome to the first edition of Carers News for 2019.

In my last Carers News message, we were eagerly awaiting the outcome of the Victorian State election. Thank you to everyone who contributed to our Victorian State election #CarersCountToo campaign by contacting their local Member of Parliament to voice what carers need. The re-election of the Andrews Labor Government is a welcome outcome for the State's 736,000 carers. It heralds a dedicated Minister for Carers, Luke Donnellan, who we introduce in a special interview on page three. There is also a new Parliamentary Secretary for Carers, Ms Lizzie Blandthorn and a promise of more than \$50 million in funding to increase respite care hours and support services for carers. Stay tuned for further updates as Carers Victoria continues to work with the Andrews Government to implement its key election promises and the Victorian carer strategy 2018–22.

As this message goes to print there's a Federal election on the horizon. To coincide, this Carers News edition is aptly themed 'Be the Voice' and focuses on advocacy and empowerment. See page 12 for guidance on voting and which rules may apply to the person you care for.

This edition also highlights many other ways to voice yourself and feel empowered. Topics covered include the power of journaling and social media. There are also tips on how



to ask for help as it's important to remember you don't have to walk the caring journey alone. Carers Victoria exists to improve the lives of carers – please call **1800 242 636** to find out what supports are available.

On a final note, if you are caring for a person with dementia I invite you to join Carers Victoria at the Dementia and Caring Families Conference on 25 June. This special event is free and open to all Victorian carers. On the day you'll find resources, hear from leading industry providers and experts and meet other carers who are walking in your shoes all in the one place. Come and listen, learn and laugh at this not to be missed one off occasion. Further details of the Conference see page 17.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Walker', written in a cursive style.

Scott Walker
Chief Executive Officer, Carers Victoria

Meet Luke Donnellan

— Minister for Carers

With the re-election of the Labor Government and significant election promises to deliver, Premier Daniel Andrews has for the first time appointed a dedicated Minister for Carers. In this special interview, meet Luke Donnellan — Minister for Carers.

Has giving or receiving care affected you or your family and friends?

Personally, it has touched me during my time as a part-time carer for a friend of mine who was suffering from Parkinson's disease. I experienced firsthand how difficult it is to care for someone you care about and watch them struggle, but also how difficult it can be to juggle caring with other parts of your life.

The reality is caring is something that is likely to touch all of us at some stage of our lives — either through giving care or receiving care from a family member, friend or professional. Across Victoria, almost 737,000 carers give their time and effort to look after a family member or friend who needs them. More than 71,000 of these are young people. Carers vary enormously in age and they might be caring for a parent, child, partner, sibling or a close friend. So the provision of care is something that affects almost all of us.

As the very first Minister for Carers, why has the Victorian Government chosen to highlight carers in this way?

This is the first time that carers has its own dedicated government portfolio, and I'm very proud to be the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. Carers make an incredible contribution to our community, providing a \$15 billion benefit to the economy every year, so the Victorian Government firmly believes they deserve a hand.



Above // Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers Luke Donnellan.

Creating this dedicated role in government is just one way we are seeking to better recognise carers and the important role they play, as well as making sure they get the support they need. It also gives us more opportunity to simply say thank-you to all those who make sacrifices to enhance someone else's life.

What do you identify as the biggest challenges for carers?

As your readers know, the care role can be hugely rewarding, but also challenging. Being a carer can affect people in different ways. It can be tough financially, and often means missing out on ordinary things you would usually do. Carers are less likely to be involved in activities outside the home, finding the time for a run or a movie with a friend can be hard. Reducing the mental, physical and financial stress for carers is a priority for me.

What are the key actions of the Victorian government to address those challenges?

Carers make a significant contribution to Victoria and carers are of all ages. We've put together a suite of programs to make sure carers get the practical help they need. These are packaged up in the Victorian carer strategy 2018–2022, which was released last year.

I'm looking forward to engaging with carers and carer organisations like Carers Vic at our first annual forum that's planned for later this year. It will be a great chance for the Parliamentary Secretary for Carers Lizzie Blandthorn and I to hear firsthand how these programs are tracking, and what else we can do.

There are five priority action areas that we're focused on; as well as providing greater access to support groups, financial advice services and

transport, and better identification of and help for young carers, we particularly want to ensure they are supported in school, study and at work. We've also invested an additional \$1.2 million in extra respite, school holiday programs and more support for carers of people with mental illness.

We're also pleased to support Carers Victoria in providing new information for carers on the new combined Carers Victoria and Everything Carers website (launch May), resources to help carers identify benefits and concessions, and with the carer awareness campaign with GPs.

Australian Government funded carer support services are changing significantly in 2019. How will you ensure Victorian carers continue to get the support they need in their caring role?

There is a lot happening this year, and not just with these changes. We are also transitioning to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and providing support for the Commonwealth Royal Commissions into Aged Care Quality and Safety, and the Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health.

Nonetheless, respecting carers is a priority for the Andrews Labor Government. In 2018, we committed an additional \$49.5 million over four years to better support carers with an extra 100,000 hours of respite annually and \$4 million over four years in grants to grass-roots carer support groups statewide. The money will also fund a year-round 50 per cent concession on public transport, and free travel across the state during Victorian Carers Week in October, for Victorian Carer Card holders.

You hold very important but often stressful portfolios. What are your top 3 self-care tips?

Many of us live very busy and hectic lives and while technology has made many parts of our lives easier, it also means we can struggle to switch off. Having a smartphone means we're constantly contactable and checking emails, texts and social media. Considering this, I think it's really important that we take time to fully switch off, spend time doing things we love and reflect on our lives.

While everyone is different, the three ways I look after my mental and physical health are:

- Spending time with family — I love relaxing with the family and enjoy watching my boys play cricket on the weekend. I find it very relaxing to wander down to Edinburgh Gardens, sit under a tree and (hopefully) see my boys make a few runs.
- Gardening — I spend a lot of time in the garden tending to my tomatoes and while I have had mixed success with the quality of the produce, I find time in the garden extremely therapeutic.
- Exercise — while we all have long, tough days that make it seem tempting to just sit on the couch when we get home, exercise can play a big role in our mental health. I go for a run every day and I often find this is the only time I completely switch off and clear my head.

What personal message would you like to send to Victoria's 736,000 carers?

The work you do is invaluable — for thousands of Victorians caring for a loved one, it's a 24/7 job. It's time for us to make sure you get the time out and practical support you need. I look forward to working with you to make that happen.

Caring Fairly

— A united voice for rights, recognition and reform

caringfairly
RIGHTS. RECOGNITION. REFORM.

A national coalition called Caring Fairly is campaigning for fairer government policies to reduce the economic disadvantages faced by Australia's 2.7 million unpaid carers. Established by Mind Australia, the coalition was launched in August 2018 at Parliament House in Canberra and comprises of over 25 Non-Government Organisations, peak bodies and community organisations from across Australia. Carers Australia and its State associations have joined the plight to better recognise and support unpaid carers over the course of the three-year campaign, particularly leading up to the Federal election.

The Caring Fairly coalition invested in leading edge research and consultation with carers, policy experts and academics to develop innovative, evidence-based policies across eight key domains. These policies aim to improve economic security for carers and reduce barriers to workforce participation, bridge gaps in support services and ensure young carers are identified and supported. A special focus was Australia's 240,000 mental health carers providing support to people living with mental illness, with research showing young mental health carers are severely disadvantaged in relation to education and employment. Their school attendance is significantly lower compared to other students aged five to 14 years old.



Above // Australia's 240,000 mental health carers are a key focus of the Caring Fairly campaign.

This policy platform was presented to key federal ministers and policy advisors within government and opposition and forms the basis of Caring Fairly's federal election campaign to deliver fairer outcomes for unpaid carers in every Australian electorate. To join the cause, download the Caring Fairly campaign toolkit from caringfairly.org.au for tips and templates on how to advocate for change in your electorate and social media you can share. The website also features links to download the full policy platform.

By taking action together, we can improve the situation of carers at home, in the workplace and society.

Stay informed

 @caringfairly

 facebook.com/caringfairlycampaign/

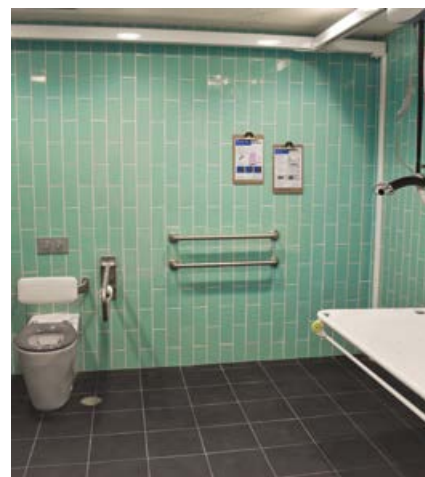
 @caringfairly

Changing Places

— A campaign for accessible public toilets



Above // A Changing Places facility is available to visitors at Victoria's Melbourne Zoo.



Above // Changing Places facility at Parks Library in Port Adelaide, South Australia.

Changing Places advocates for public toilets with full sized change tables and hoists in major public spaces across Australia to meet the needs of people with complex and profound disabilities and their carers. There are currently 78 accredited Changing Places facilities located across the country and, with many State governments investing in the program, this number will rapidly rise.

Australia's campaign is based on the successful implementation of the Changing Places concept in the UK where there are more than 1,250 accredited facilities. A Changing Places facility differs to a regular accessible toilet by its features and size. It offers a motorised height adjustable adult change table, a tracking hoist system and room for two people either side of a peninsula toilet: all in a safe, clean and spacious environment.

Changing Places will support more than 1.2 million Australians with a

severe disability and their carers to participate in their local community and access public attractions. Victoria leads the way with 34 permanent toilets situated across metropolitan and regional locations, including the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne Zoo and Melbourne Arena. South Australia opened its first Changing Places facility in January 2019 at Parks Library in Angle Park in Port Adelaide, with more sites planned for Adelaide, Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Victor Harbor and Mount Gambier. Tasmania currently has no accredited Changing Places facilities but plans to join the campaign soon. However, there are several accessible adult change toilets similar to a Changing Places facility — visit toiletmap.gov.au/Find/tas for details.

Local governments and public and private entities are also committed to including Changing Places facilities in their future developments. From 1 May 2019, the National Construction Code will require a new class of toilet based on the Changing Places design

to be built in certain types of public buildings. This includes large shopping centres, sporting centres with an occupancy of over 35,000 spectators, larger public pools, museums, art galleries, theatres and airports. Events and festivals are becoming accessible too with six 'Marveloos' (a portable type of Changing Places toilet) available across the country for hire.

To find your nearest Changing Places toilet or Marveloo visit <https://changingplaces.org.au>.



Above // Six 'Marveloos' are available for hire to improve accessibility at festivals and events around Australia.

Transforming Families Lives

— A carer's experience of Changing Places

Victorian mother and carer Paula Groves shares how the Changing Places campaign has positively changed her family's life.

"I'm a mum of three children and Toby is my 13-year-old young man who has cerebral palsy. Toby has his challenges and one of them is incontinence. I am regularly faced with the challenge of being able to toilet/change Toby with dignity, as going to the toilet is a basic human right not a privilege.

There have been times — too many unfortunately — where we have had to change Toby on the floor of a disabled toilet as the baby change table doesn't cut it for a teenager, or in the back of the car and on occasion we have even had to cut our day out short to head home to toilet/change, which is upsetting for everyone.

As a mum of a child with additional needs I do my homework before we even head out the door, it makes the trip easier and more pleasant for all. I look up facilities online before heading off, to see what is around or in the vicinity of where we are going.

For example, on a recent trip to Sydney I made a list of all the places with Changing Places toilets or adult change facilities and those locations were on the top of our visit list.

Being able to use a Changing Places toilet means we can plan a day trip or longer, knowing that when and if we need the facilities they are there for us. The fact that Changing Places toilets are popping up all over the place makes me so happy, as being able to plan trips to the footy, a concert or a trip to the zoo is made more appealing as I don't have to worry about 'what if' Toby needs to go to the toilet.

A real highlight for us as a family was when we attended the Disabled Surfing Event at Point Leo on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula and we were lucky enough to be able to use the portable Changing Places toilet (a Marveloo). When I say lucky I truly mean it because changing a child

out of a rashie and bathers is hard at the best of times but throw in the added complication of a child using a wheelchair and it can quite often mean a trip to the beach is 'all too hard'. For us knowing that the portable Changing Places toilet was at the event meant we headed down to the beach and Toby got to experience surfing just like any other kid — and he loved it!

As Toby grows up and wants to head off with to do things with his mates, we know that with Changing Places toilets appearing around Victoria and the rest of Australia, Toby's toileting is one less thing we need to worry about."

Stay updated

Register at changingplaces.org.au/join-our-mailing-list/ for updates on news, events and local campaigns.



Above // Toby (centre) at the Disabled Surfing Event at Point Leo in Victoria.



Above // Paula with her family.



Living in times of hope

Caring can be a tough role for anyone, but Zahra does it every day with lots of patience, an open mind and a smile on her face.

Zahra Mohamed was born in Somalia and moved to Tasmania in 2009 after living in the mainland of Australia for nine years. She is mum to five children ranging in age from three to 14 years.

Zahra's 10-year-old daughter Mumtaz needs a lot of extra support in her daily life as she has significant disability and health concerns. Mumtaz's actual diagnosis has changed several times throughout the course of her young life which has been quite stressful, upsetting and confusing for Zahra. Mumtaz was originally diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy but she has received several different variations of diagnosis. Despite this, Zahra faces each day as it comes with a positive and open outlook.

Life at home is very busy with Zahra supporting all her children with love and care, as well as meeting Mumtaz's additional needs.

Mumtaz's siblings all support her in their own ways. The eldest children, 14-year-old Muna and 13-year-old Mohamed, help as much as they can and five-year-old Mulki is great at communicating with Mumtaz and is often incredibly helpful in assisting her communication. Even three-year-

old Mubarak is supportive. A beautiful example is that he will go and get his sister a tissue every time she sneezes.

Zahra also works part-time and tries to juggle this around her parenting and caring responsibilities. Zahra is (and needs to be) very organised and realises that routines are the only way to keep everything on track.

She contacted Carers Tasmania and registered Mumtaz for the Better Start program for children with a disability in 2013. This funding was quite helpful to access services such as physiotherapy and occupational and speech therapies.

In July 2017, Zahra was experiencing great difficulty navigating the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). She really needed a suitable and safe wheelchair to transport Mumtaz in her car. Due to not having appropriate support, Zahra was having to carry Mumtaz from house to car and then car to school. Having to carry her daughter to and from the car negatively impacted Zahra's physical health.

Carers Tasmania helped Zahra follow up the NDIS application and plan for what could be requested for Mumtaz in her NDIS plan. Finally, Zahra felt

like she had people on her side who were trying to support her and her daughter. Due to Carers Tasmania staff following-up, Mumtaz's NDIS plan began in December 2017.

Supports were put in place through the NDIS plan which were of great benefit to Mumtaz. These also reduced some of the physical and emotional stress for Zahra. Mumtaz received an appropriate wheelchair. A support worker will come into the home seven days a week to assist with getting ready before school and provide support in the afternoons or on the weekend. Mumtaz also attends hydrotherapy and loves it. Zahra says there is a support co-ordinator for Mumtaz's NDIS plan and their assistance is greatly appreciated. Without a co-ordinator, Zahra feels that life would be quite overwhelming.

Zahra's message to all carers is:

"Keep positive, keep asking for help and although some things might take a long time, things have potential to change for the better if you hang in there".

— Zahra



A Delicate Balance

When Melbourne mum Adriana Paz enters work each morning, she mentally prepares for a busy day ahead as a legal secretary. Like most working mothers, her daily to-do list is a balance between work tasks and mum duties. But Adriana's list reveals an added layer of complexity — she is a carer for two of her four daughters.

Adriana has never identified with being a carer. "I do what any mother would do in my situation," she says. This includes coordinating appointments for Isabella and Natalie (aged 11 and eight respectively) so their specialists can see them at school, regularly calling Natalie to soothe her separation anxiety or spending nights in hospital with Isabella during a paralysis episode. "It's not until you make enquiries on behalf of your child that the label 'carer' is placed on you."

Adriana's caring journey began during one of the darkest periods in her life. While visiting her 11-week premature baby Emily in the neonatal intensive care unit, she received a call advising Isabella was experiencing paralysis. A year later, a neurologist provided an answer for the sporadic episodes — Isabella has a rare neuromuscular condition called Hypokalemic Periodic Paralysis and Conversion Disorder.

Two months later Natalie was diagnosed with autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder/Oppositional Defiant Disorder, moderate speech impairment and obstructive sleep apnoea. "The difficulties just kept

coming for my family. 2017 was a very difficult year" reflects Adriana.

Isabella's most severe episodes leave her paralysed for up to 24 hours during, which Adriana must do everything — right down to scratching her daughter's nose. The aftermath is also challenging as Isabella tends to withdraw in fear of triggering another episode. If there's one steady constant for Adriana it's the support of her partner Jason, who is stepdad to Isabella and Natalie and father to their daughters Emily and Claudia. "I don't know what I'd do without him. It doesn't matter how hard the situation gets he's always upbeat," she says.

Jason's role as stay-at-home dad has helped Adriana transition back to work. "Would I rather be at home supporting my family? Yes. But this job pays the bills," she says. After work Adriana often finds herself on the floor comforting Natalie during a tantrum or dealing with her dislike of many foods. "I can't remember the last time we had a meal in peace," she says.

The unpredictability surrounding their circumstances makes it hard to plan social outings or getaways.

By being open with people about what she's going through, Adriana hopes they'll understand the plight of carers.

"You're not looking for sympathy from people but asking they don't judge you. We want recognition that we're not just parents and for our situation to be treated with respect when we try to mingle with society".

— Adriana

The couple want to establish carer events where working mums caring for a child with disability can gather. With varying experiences in getting her daughters approved under the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Adriana has plenty of advice to share with others. "Take notes of names, ask for recorded message receipts — document everything!" she cautions.

To connect with Adriana email adrip_1979@yahoo.com.au

Carer Gateway Service Provider: — what to expect from September 2019



What is the ICSS and Carer Gateway?

As reported in the last *Carers News*, the Integrated Carer Support Service (ICSS) is a Commonwealth reform of services for family and friend carers. Under the new arrangements, funding for existing services, such as funding for Carers associations, and the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres (CRCCs) are being merged into a single Carer Gateway.

From September 2019, the Carer Gateway will commence rolling-out a network of providers delivering local and targeted services for carers across Australia.

In each state and territory, one or more Carer Gateway service providers (CGSPs) will be established under the ICSS. For example, in South Australia and Victoria there will be two CGSPs (Adelaide and regional SA, and Melbourne and regional Victoria), whilst in Tasmania there will be a single service provider.

What will the Carer Gateway service provider (CGSP) do?

The CGSP will be responsible for ensuring family and friend carers are supported in their caring roles, no matter the location within the service area. They will either work directly or work with other organisations to provide services locally.

What does this mean for carers?

In implementing these reforms, the Commonwealth wants to focus on preventing carer strain and loss of wellbeing arising from your caring role. The Government also recognises the financial impact of caring and wants to place greater emphasis on remaining in or returning to employment where possible. It is expected that the CGSP will understand carer needs and be able to provide the right supports to achieve these outcomes at a local level.

What carer services are continuing?

If you are using carer services now, you can keep using those services.

You can continue to access existing carer services funded by the Department of Social Services through your usual service providers until the new Carer Gateway service providers commence in September 2019.

Current carer services will remain in place until November 2019 to support you while you move to the new Carer Gateway service providers.

Under the new arrangements important carer services will remain, including:

- Information and advice — supporting carers to understand available services and 'navigate the maze'.
- Peer support — access to peer support groups with carers going through the same situation.
- Counselling — up to six sessions with a skilled, professional and qualified counsellor.

Peer support groups will change slightly. Under the Carer Gateway service provider, a staff member will facilitate the group meeting and support the group to be self-sustaining over a period of up to 12-months.

What's changing?

Carer Directed Support packages will be available under the new service model.

The concept of the Carer Directed Support package is that it works similarly to the Carer Directed Respite Care (CDRC) packages currently offered.

The packages will be delivered either as a one-off practical support or a range of practical supports provided over a 12 month period. The value of the packages will range from \$1,500 up to a maximum amount of \$3,000, depending on the needs and individual circumstances of each carer receiving support.

Practical one-off supports will take the form of a tangible item that directly contributes to supporting the carer in their caring role or supporting the carer to access education or employment.

The provision of ongoing practical supports will involve a Carer Support Worker engaging with a carer and actively planning on a quarterly basis what those supports might look like. Where a carer is able to, they are encouraged to actively manage the supports themselves. Practical supports may include services such as respite and assistance with transport.

What's new?

From July 2019 carers will have access to these new Carer Gateway services:

- Phone Counselling — where you can get one-on-one support with a professional counsellor over the phone if you feel stressed or overwhelmed.

- Online Community Forum — where you can be part of a supportive community with other carers.
- Self-Guided Coaching — where you can work through interactive coaching at your own pace.
- Skills Courses — where you can study online courses and learn new skills to help you in your caring role.

These services will be available via carergateway.gov.au from July 2019.

From July 2020 you will have access to face-to-face coaching. You will be able to select from a suite of topics and receive one-on-one coaching from a carer support officer. The topics will likely relate to the areas that are causing you most concern.

What if I prefer to access services online?

All of the ICSS supports will be available online through the National Carer Gateway. From July this year, carers will be able to access counselling, peer support, education resources and, from July 2020, individual coaching.

How will the CGSP identify my needs?

From September 2019 you will be offered assistance with identifying appropriate support needs, help to access those supports and advice on future support planning through the Carer Gateway service providers.

The Carer Support Planning process involves a carer support officer engaging in a conversation with you to understand your needs (similar to what happens now), measuring your wellbeing, co-creating an action plan to address your needs and arranging the services identified in the action plan.

A key tool in this planning process will be the Carer Star™. This international approach enables a conversation between you and the carer support officer across seven dimensions to zero-in on your key challenges and work with you to provide supports to address them.

How will I access the Carer Gateway?

The Carer Gateway is changing to make it easier for you to get the help you need.

From September 2019 you can call just one number to find the help you need. Calling **1800 422 737** will enable you to speak with your local Carer Gateway service provider. You can request a call-back on carergateway.gov.au.

Your Carer Gateway service provider will talk you through what you need and help you find services and support in your area.

How do I keep up-to-date about all the changes?

Visit your State Carer Association's website to subscribe to their e-news and social media. As we know more news, we will share it through these channels. If you have a question, send it using the email for your State or call **1800 242 636**.

South Australia,
ICCSenquiries@carers-sa.asn.au

Tasmania,
CGSP@carerstasmania.org

Victoria,
reception@carersvictoria.org.au



Federal election voting

– Advice for carers

All eligible Australian citizens aged 18 and over are required by law to enrol and vote at a federal election.

There are few exemptions under Australian law from your obligation to vote. Most people with a disability can vote but may require additional support. If you support a person with profound disability or advanced dementia who is not able to understand the nature and significance of voting, you can apply to remove their name from the electoral roll by completing a form on the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) website aec.gov.au. The person must be assessed to be of 'unsound mind' by a registered medical professional.

You can check your enrolment status, enrol for the first time or re-enrol on the AEC website. A person previously removed from the electoral roll on medical grounds must submit a new enrolment application with medical certificate signed by a registered medical practitioner.

A voter unable to write or sign their name due to a physical disability can get someone else to complete and sign an enrolment form on their behalf. However, there is no proxy voting in federal elections in Australia. Holders of power of attorney are not permitted

to vote or sign a declaration envelope on behalf of the voter.

Voting accessibility

After the federal election is announced, Australian households will receive an official guide in the post. Accessible versions (including braille, audio and large print) will be available from the AEC website or by contacting an AEC office.

Voters living with disability, mobility restrictions or illness may be eligible to vote early in person or by post. You can apply for a postal vote online or at an AEC office. As a carer you may assist the voter to complete their ballot papers and envelope according to their instruction, but the voter must sign or make their mark on the envelope.

The AEC provides a telephone voting service for voters with visual impairment to cast their vote from home. Mobile polling is also carried out across Australia in hospitals and nursing homes to assist people otherwise unable to access a polling place.

If you and the person you support will visit a polling place on election day, plan ahead by checking its accessibility

and specific features. People unable to vote without assistance can select their carer, relative or friend as a helper. The designated helper can enter the polling booth with the voter to help them complete and deposit the ballot paper. Polling staff are also trained to assist, and a scrutineer is allowed to observe the ballot paper being completed.

Failure to vote

If a person you care for is unable to vote, advise a polling official on the day. Eligible voters who fail to vote will receive a letter from the AEC and must respond with a valid and sufficient reason for not voting or pay a \$20 penalty. An AEC officer will decide each case individually in accordance with the legislation.

More information

For information visit
[aec.gov.au/Voting/
people-with-
disability.htm](http://aec.gov.au/Voting/people-with-disability.htm)

The Power of *Journaling*



Carer Anne Phelfey uses her journaling time to write poetry. Here's her poem 'Carer Fatigue':

If caring becomes a chilling chore
That's a sorry state you
cannot ignore

Take stock; step back and realise
You have actually won the
greatest prize.

This time you have is precious and
rare offering joy beyond compare.

That special kiss goodnight elicits
a smile

It makes you go that extra mile
Cuddles and laughter, each
moment you share are a fleeting
blessing that becomes more rare.

You only deprive yourself of
happiness and love

And a spirit of peace that just fits
like a glove

Suddenly, like waking, you come
to know

This time with your loved one may
suddenly go.



Journaling is the practice of noting down thoughts, feelings or events related to your life. There are no rules on how, when or what to journal. The key is to take a moment to find some quiet time and reflect.

The health benefits of journaling are plentiful. Noting down emotions and experiences can be therapeutic and encourage healing, change, growth and self-awareness. This may be particularly useful when trying to cope with grief or resolve complex problems. Research shows journaling helps to manage mental health and boosts cognitive functioning and immunity. It's also proven to counteract stress and decrease symptoms of asthma, arthritis and other health conditions.

Journaling is one of the cheapest ways to practice self-care and stress management. All that's required is a pen and paper; however, you can use a smartphone or laptop instead. Journaling is most beneficial when done consistently, so find a routine which works best for you. Some people journal in the evening to recap their day while others prefer first thing in the morning before their schedule takes over.

Tips to get started

- Forget about perfect grammar or spelling and focus on accessing thoughts and emotions.
- Smart small. Write a few sentences or bullet points each day to build the habit.
- Be honest and let the words flow freely. Nobody will read what you write unless you allow them.
- If journaling about a negative emotion or topic, end by reflecting on something positive.

Writing inspiration

- Journal about aspects in your day or life which you are grateful for.
- Write down your feelings about an event or person as a way of processing them.
- Reflect on your goals and what you need to do each day to achieve them.
- Pen a declaration of your core values and how you intend to live your life.

Google search 'journaling prompts' for more ideas. Write a list of options and fold them into a jar to try a new one each day.

By committing 10 – 15 minutes a day to journal you may improve your general wellbeing and ability to make better life choices.



Australian Electoral Commission
electorate.aec.gov.au

Victorian Electoral Commission
tec.vic.gov.au

Tasmanian Electoral Commission
tec.tas.gov.au

Electoral Commission
South Australia
ecsa.sa.gov.au

Be The Voice For Carers

Policy and research staff at Carers Australia and the network of State and Territory Carer Associations work closely together on issues and policies of significance to carers.

This includes conducting extensive consultation with carers to ensure their opinions and priorities are considered when government policy and service delivery is planned and evaluated. Other priorities for policy and research staff are to:

- Analyse and comment on government policies affecting carers and their families.
- Represent the diverse needs of carers.
- Lobby for improvement through submissions and representations to Ministers.
- Promote development and delivery of quality, flexible and carer-inclusive services.
- Participate in research with carers and the people they care for.

Current issues of focus include the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, The Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health and the National Disability Insurance Scheme implementation.

Advocating for your rights

The best way to initiate reform and recognition is by contacting a Member of Parliament (MP) via phone, email, post or requesting to meet person. Find your Federal MP on the Australian Electoral Commission website and State MP on your relevant State Electoral Commission website (details in box above). It may feel daunting to initiate contact but remember it's their job to represent the concerns of citizens within their electorate.

If writing a letter, start by introducing yourself and your reasons for making contact. Then expand on these reasons by including personal examples to help the politician connect with your concerns. Where possible, obtain permission from the person you care for if including personal information about them.

Also suggest what actions the politician can take to resolve your concerns. This may be funding initiatives, contacting government departments or raising issues within their political party.

Be polite and courteous but firm. Don't be afraid to say you disagree with their views and offer reasons for why your points should be considered. It's also a good idea to build rapport by identifying anything you have in common or offering encouragement if they've previously addressed any concerns.

Keep correspondence to a maximum of two pages and remember to thank the politician for their time and mention you look forward to their reply. Be mindful it may take several weeks for a response. If you haven't received one by then, you can phone their office for an update.

Preparing a submission to government enquiries

The Federal Government recently initiated a Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, calling on interested members of the public to make a submission. Making a submission to a government enquiry involves the same approach as writing to an MP, but always read the Terms of Reference first. This will guide your response and is available on the Commission's website. To make a submission visit: agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/submissions.

Social Media Savvy



Whether you have dabbled in social media or are looking to get started, here's how you can utilise the most popular platforms to support your caring role.

YouTube

YouTube is a video streaming site which enables everyone to share their own videos and watch footage uploaded by others. Content varies from fun and light-hearted videos to informational tutorials, how-to-demonstrations and Q&A's.

Create an account and search for videos based on topic, organisation or subject matter. Subscribe to an individual or organisation's channel to receive notifications every time they share a new video.

Ideas for YouTube

- Carers Australia has over 100 videos available and Carers Victoria offers tips on self-care for all carers.
- Carer Gateway has animations on a host of topics and videos of carer stories.

Twitter

Twitter is a self-expression tool favoured by politicians, journalists, academics, organisations and the general public. Users can keep up-to-date with breaking news, traffic, weather and find events or view 'Trending Topics' discussed locally or globally.

To join, select a username of 15 characters or less (also known as a 'handle'). Find subjects, individuals or organisations to follow and share, or comment on their content. Remember to post your thoughts too and use relevant hashtags to make them visible to others.

Ideas for Twitter

- Follow politicians, councils, government departments, newspapers and TV stations.
- Add your voice to campaigns such as Every Australian Counts and #raisetherate (for Newstart Allowance).

Facebook

Facebook enables you to follow organisations, interact with other carers, find local events and share your thoughts, personal stories and photos with others.

You will need to create a Facebook profile to actively engage with pages of interest via likes, comments and shares and connect with others through friend requests or Facebook groups.

Ideas for Facebook

- Follow Carers Australia and your State Carers Association for news and events.
- Join peer support group pages or create one for your own network.

Pinterest

Pinterest is a platform for sharing and categorising images and information found online (think of it as a corkboard to 'pin' images). You can use your email address or Facebook account to sign up.

Ideas for Pinterest

- Enter the word 'carer' in the search bar and 'pin' tips and techniques for future reference.
- Create a board of your own images to share with others.

Tip: Visit your State Carers Association website and the Carers Australia website to see how you can connect with them.



10 Ways to Ask For Help

Asking for help can be difficult but is an important step toward managing your wellbeing and stress levels.

1 Attend carer events

Check to see what carer events your local council, Carers Association, Neighbourhood House or Respite Centre have scheduled. These are a great way to discover what services and supports are available and gain advice from experts and other carers.

2 Talk to a friend

As the old saying goes, 'a problem shared is a problem halved'. Most people will be happy to help if they are told how they can assist. **Gathermycrew.org** is a free online rostering tool which lets you coordinate assistance from family and friends using an online calendar and task list.

3 Call your Carers Association

They are friendly professionals who can offer advice and provide access to a range of services and resources including education workshops, counselling and referrals to support groups.

4 Seek counselling

A counsellor is a qualified professional who can listen objectively and help with developing effective coping strategies for troubling emotions or problems. Lifeline (13 11 14) offers free and confidential telephone counselling on a 24/7 basis Australia-wide.

5 Join a support group

By connecting with others who truly understand the impacts of caring, you can receive advice and learn from others' experiences. With so many general and specific carer support groups available and different ways to participate (in person, phone, online etc), you're bound to find one which meets your needs.

6 Write to your local Member of Parliament (MP)

Contact your local MP to advise what supports are lacking in your electorate and how carers can be better supported. Extend an offer to meet in person to discuss your recommendations.

7 Start a conversation online

A Google or Facebook search will reveal many online forums where people gather to chat and lend support. Most forums can be joined or read anonymously and you may find there's already advice relevant to your concern.

8 Consider respite

Respite comes in different forms. It can vary from asking loved ones to give you a few hours break, to enquiring with your local Carer Association about what paid supports exist and whether there are subsidies to fund them.

9 Enrol in a course

Knowledge is empowering. Your local Carer Association offers many free workshops, as well as webinars which can be joined from the comfort of your own home. Future Learn: **futurelearn.com** offers a diverse selection of free online courses from leading education providers around the world.

10 Get legal support

The Disability Ombudsman, Office of the Public Advocate and Legal Aid services are all avenues to seek assistance or advice about your rights. The OPA and Legal Aid also have free publications which may help you to work out certain problems.

Self-care

Remember self-care is essential for good physical and emotional health. Allow yourself to be vulnerable by acknowledging when you are stressed and need emotional, physical or financial support.

Dementia and Caring Families Conference

– 25 June 2019

A high portion of referrals and enquiries received by Carers Victoria are from carers supporting a person diagnosed with dementia. An estimated 425,000 Australians are currently living with the illness. Dementia is the leading cause of death among Australian women and the single greatest cause of disability in Australians aged 65 years or older.

In light of these staggering figures, Carers Victoria is hosting a FREE special event for carers supporting people with dementia. The conference will be held at William Angliss Conference Centre (555 Latrobe Street, Melbourne) from 9.30am to 3.30pm and is open to carers

across Victoria. Carers Victoria and guest speakers from Dementia Australia, Palliative Care Victoria and other organisations will offer expert advice and coping strategies to help manage the condition more effectively. Participants can also explore a range of information stalls delivered by leading service providers.

Most importantly, the event is an opportunity to connect with other carers and build a network of peer support. Come and join what shall be a rewarding and inspiring day for all. Registrations are essential. For more information or to reserve your spot, call Carers Victoria on **1800 242 636** or email events@carersvictoria.org.au.



LaunchMe – Kickstarting Young Carers dreams

Do you know a young carer aged 16 – 25 seeking support with their life goals? Carers Victoria, in partnership with Good Shepherd Microfinance, has a program called LaunchMe which aims to support young carers in realising their full potential.

LaunchMe is free and delivered State-wide. Participants attend an initial workshop to discuss their goals, meet other young carers and receive expert advice on personal finances and wellbeing. This is followed by nine months of regular face-to-face or online support to develop micro-enterprise skills and generate an income from a hobby or learn skills in preparation for entering the workforce. LaunchMe has recently helped a young carer launch her own dressmaking business which gives her the flexibility to work from home while caring for a parent.

New openings are available in May 2019. Young carers can register their interest at launchme.org.au/youngcarers and Program buddy Shelley Karpathakis will be in contact with details.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Carers Victoria is proud to support the national reconciliation movement by developing and implementing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This strategic document will embed practical actions which contribute to reconciliation both internally and in the communities in which they operate. Carers Victoria aims to take a coordinated, holistic and action-based

approach to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. We would like these individuals accessing our services, or working with us, to feel safe knowing their culture is valued. Although there are Carers Victoria staff who have already built relationships with local Aboriginal people and organisations, the organisation is thrilled to be taking a coordinated approach to reconciliation.

Take a Break

Sudoku

			1			9	8
					4	6	3
6				5			4
5	1		7	6			
	6					8	
				4	1		2
4				1			2
7	5		4				
1	8				3		

Sudoku Answers:

1	8	6	5	2	3	9	4	7
7	5	2	4	8	9	3	1	6
4	9	3	6	1	7	8	5	2
9	3	7	8	4	1	6	2	5
2	6	4	9	3	5	7	8	1
5	1	8	7	6	2	4	3	9
6	2	9	3	5	8	1	7	4
8	7	1	2	9	4	5	6	3
3	4	5	1	7	6	2	9	8

Source: www.sudokuoftheday.com



Recipe – MUSHROOM AND CHEESE SOUFFLE

This delicious recipe originates from the “Rooster Cookbook” first published by the Country Women’s Association in 1956 and revised in 2016. A flavoursome choice for the cooler weather months ahead.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons plain flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Pinch cayenne pepper
- 4 eggs
- ½ cup sliced mushrooms, sautéed gently in additional butter
- 2 tablespoons grated cheese
- ¾ cup milk

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees.
2. Grease a 20cm soufflé dish. Tie a string of baking paper around the outside of the dish, ensuring it stands at least 10cm above the rim.
3. Separate eggs. Beat egg whites until stiff.
4. Melt butter, remove from heat and stir in salt, flour and cayenne pepper. Add milk, return to a gentle heat and stir until mixture thickens. Add mushrooms, egg yolks and cheese. Mix well.
5. Gently fold in the egg whites.
6. Gently pour the mixture into the prepared dish and bake for 30 minutes.
7. Serve immediately with a crisp green salad and crusty bread.

Reprinted with permission from Marie Vassallo, Country Women’s Association. For more tasty recipes, visit www.cwaa.org.au.

Education Workshops

Calendar 2019

All workshops are held at Carers Victoria, Level 1, 37 Albert Street Footscray.

WORKSHOP	DATE(S)	TIME
<p>FREE Carers online workshops* (Events #6051 and #6052)</p> <p>This two-part workshop is suitable for carers who have basic computer skills and will build confidence in using the internet safely. Session two supports carers to set up a myGov account and link to government services such as Centrelink, Medicare etc.</p>	<p>Session 1, 30 April</p> <p>Session 2, 7 May</p>	10am – 12pm
<p>FREE NDIS Mental Health program (Event #6053)</p> <p>This three-part series is for carers of a person with a mental health condition or disability and those preparing to transition to the NDIS or access it for the first time. Topics covered include carers role and rights, plan management options, choosing supports and making a complaint.</p>	<p>Session 1, 7 May</p> <p>Session 2, 14 May</p> <p>Session 3, 21 May</p>	10am – 1pm
<p>FREE Over-caring costs the carer (Event #6057)</p> <p>Avoid falling into the trap of 'over-caring.' This workshop explores what this concept means for both you and the person you care for and is an opportunity to reflect on your caring style.</p>	7 June	10am – 12pm
<p>Carer Support Group Facilitator Training (Event #6031)</p> <p>A comprehensive workshop suitable for new facilitators or current facilitators or those wishing to start a Carer Support Group. Learn how to start, grow and facilitate a Carer Support Group. Participants receive session notes and a certificate of attendance.</p> <p>FEES: Carers \$50 Workers \$100</p>	13 June	10am – 3pm
<p>FREE Strong boundaries, strong carers (Event #6058)</p> <p>Learn practical strategies to protect your sense of self and wellbeing by deciding what behaviour you can and can't accept from others in your life.</p>	14 June	10am – 12pm
<p>FREE Aged Care info session (Event #6085)</p> <p>The aged care system is complex and can be confusing. This information session covers the Government website, My Aged Care, screening and assessment processes, services at home and residential care.</p>	10 July	10am – 12pm
<p>NDIS information session (Event #6065)</p> <p>This information session is designed for people caring for a person with a disability and want to know more about the NDIS. Topics covered include eligibility and the role of carers and includes a Q&A.</p>	16 July	10am – 12pm
<p>FREE Aged Care program (Event #6062)</p> <p>This two-part program is for families and carer and covers topics including eligibility for services including the Aged Care Assessment, types of services and who provides them and the costs. Session two explores residential care including eligibility, how to apply and costs.</p>	<p>Session 1, 17 July</p> <p>Session 2, 24 July</p>	10am – 1pm

*Carers Victoria provides iPads for participants to use in the workshop.

To register your attendance please call Carers Victoria on 1800 242 636 or book online at www.carersvictoria.org.au/events/educationworkshops.



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