

ANNUAL REVIEW

2022-2023

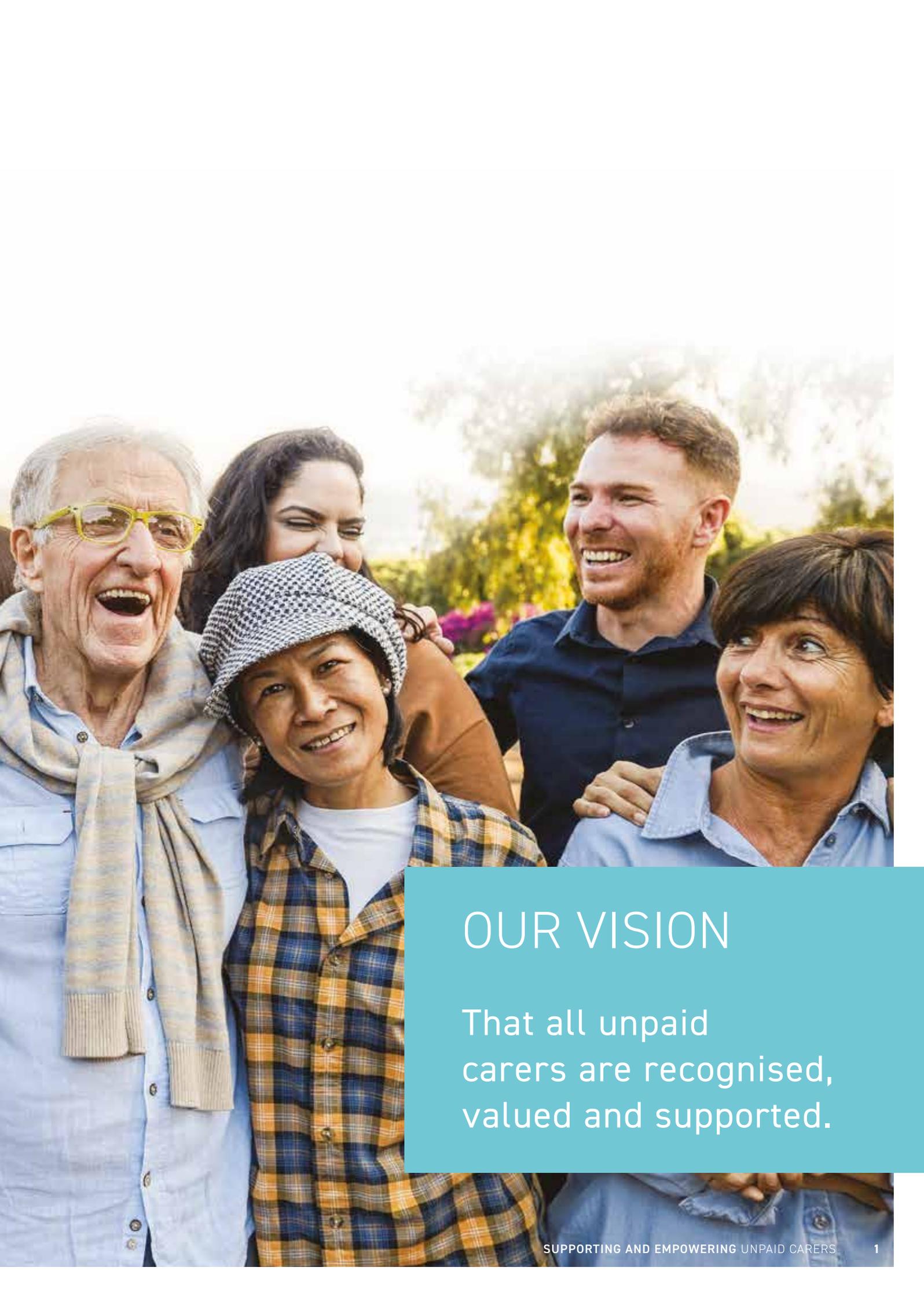


Carers Victoria supporting
and empowering unpaid carers

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OUR VISION

That all unpaid carers are recognised, valued and supported.



A Message from the Chair and CEO

Carers Victoria exists to improve understanding of, and access to assistance for, carers and our 30th anniversary provided a fantastic opportunity to promote both.



There was a range of 30th anniversary themed events, including the highlight celebration held at Victorian Parliament House in August 2022. This was attended by both carers and a range of parliamentarians, including the Minister responsible for carers, and the Shadow Minister. The event helped in raising the visibility of carers and the important role they play. It also showcased some of our carers' own stories that were documented to mark the milestone, and we extend our deep gratitude to those who share their caring experience for that project. You can view those stories here www.carersvictoria.org.au/CarerStories.

Another highlight for the year was the growth in callers to our Statewide Carer Advisory Service. This was established to fill a gap by providing timely, succinct, and practical advice for carers, including assistance in navigating often-complex service systems. In the reporting year, the service transitioned from a pilot project to an ongoing part of the assistance Carers Victoria provides.

This was another step in the organisation's move towards providing more assistance for carers statewide. Over the reporting year, the Board also endorsed a strategy to expand the organisation's reach into rural and regional Victoria.

Carers Victoria also changed location, moving from our large Footscray offices to premises shared with Good Shepherd ANZ in Melbourne's CBD. With a strong alignment of values between the two organisations, this move offers many benefits. The offices are primarily a staff hub as our service model continues to combine phone and online assistance with face-to-face activities for carers.

We continued to advocate for improvements for carers over the reporting year, including making submissions to government reviews and inquiries and through release of our “Carers Count Too” pre-election platform. Carer-specific commitments made by both the then-Minister and the Shadow Minister for Carers in the pre-election period were much appreciated.

With the Victorian Carer Strategy due for renewal, it was timely to engage with carers in online and face-to-face focus groups to explore their current views, priorities, and needs. Challenges with service navigation, access to respite, and overall health and wellbeing continue to be key issues identified, alongside the need for assistance with cost-of-living pressures and broader recognition.

In this context, we welcomed the 2023 State Budget announcement of continued funding for additional carer respite and the subsequent decision to continue offering public transport concessions to carer card holders.

In the reporting year, we also started actively investing in strategies to build relationships with corporate and philanthropic partners to reach more unpaid carers, raise broader understanding of the importance of carers and their needs, build new funding opportunities and explore discounts for our members.

It was not, however, all smooth sailing. Continuing government funding reforms pose challenges, and while we continued to offer government funded respite through both the Victorian Government Support for Carers Program and the Australian Government Community Home Support Program, we were disappointed that like some other large metropolitan providers, the Victorian Government reduced our Support for Carers funding.

The reporting year saw changes to the Carers Victoria Board, with Helen Johnson and Charles Hardman departing and Nick Field appointed as a new director. We also had two new independent members join our Board Committees, Berin Lautenbach and Karina Posanzini.

We extend our thanks to all directors, independent committee members, funders, supporters, our Carers Victoria staff, and the many carers who took time out from their busy lives to share their stories, insights, and expertise – we could not do it without you all.

Carers Victoria, like most organisations, is on a journey of reinvention, as we strive to maximise our reach so that as many Victorian carers as possible can get assistance when they need it. At the same time, we know that continuing changes in our funding and operating environment will offer both opportunities and challenges.

Carers Victoria will continue to pro actively navigate these, so that we can achieve our vision of a future where all unpaid carers are recognised, valued, and supported.

Sue Peden AM

Board Chair, Carers Victoria

Judith Abbott

CEO, Carers Victoria

Photo to left: CEO Judith Abbott, Minister Blandthorn and Board Chair Sue Peden AM.







Who is Carers Victoria?

We are the state-wide peak body representing unpaid carers across Victoria, regardless of who they are, where they live, or who they care for.

We provide a wide range of assistance to carers, including provision of government-funded respite and support, education and training, delivery of events and other activities, and ongoing information and advice tailored to their needs and interests.

Alongside this, we generate data and analysis about carers and their needs, advocate for changes that can improve their access to assistance, and work with a diverse mix of partners to raise overall understanding, recognition of and support for Victoria's unpaid carers.

The Victorian Carer Recognition Act 2012 sets out care relationship principles that organisations such as Carers Victoria must comply with. Over the reporting year, we continued to deliver a diverse mix of assistance for carers in line with these principles, actively seeking the views and advice of carers and offering supports tailored to their needs. With more than 70% of staff having living or lived experience, a deep understanding of, and commitment to, the needs of carers is a hallmark of Carers Victoria and underpins and informs everything we do.

Our Impact

Engaging with Carers and Supporters



26%
growth in Membership



8%
growth in our ebulletin
'The Voice' subscribers



Media engagement
increased by over
50%

Supporting and Connecting Victorian Carers



40,982 hours
of **support** delivered
to carers



282%
increase in contacts
to the Statewide
Carer Advisory Service



8,491 hours
of **workshops and training**
delivered



28
events and activities
delivered across Victoria



Building Capacity and Connections Across Victoria



257
organisations accredited
a Carer Friendly Place



110
grants provided
to Carer Support Groups

Voice for Carers



25+
state MPs engaged in
Carers Victoria events



130+
carers participated
in carer focus groups



Survey Data
released for 2022
National Carer Survey

Assistance and Connection for Carers



Providing tailored assistance to carers remained a major focus for us, with a **wide range of respite and other support provided to carers** in Melbourne's West via the Victorian Government Support for Carers and Additional Respite programs, alongside programs funded under the Australian Government's Community Home Support Program.

Despite a funding reduction, carers benefited from more than 41,000 hours of support and respite across the state, as well as participating in 19,000 hours of specialised carer events and activities and support groups. A total of 124 education sessions were delivered across the state, 27 of which were online, 29 tailored to rural and regional carers and 22 to groups of culturally and linguistically diverse carers and their families, alongside participation in tailored events such as the Elders Information Forum Expo where we engaged with First Nations carers.

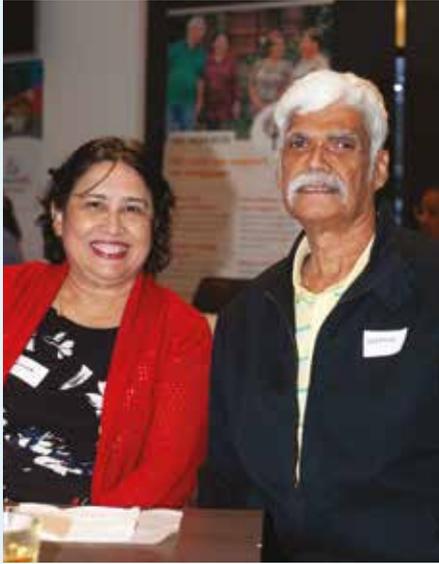
We want to keep adapting our assistance to carers to meet what they need, so we were thrilled that over 2022-23, we were able to respond to 6475 calls to our **Statewide Carer Advisory Service**. We have been building our investment in this phone-based service to help carers more easily navigate complex service systems and access timely information and advice.

Another way we support carers is by delivering a mix of educational and training programs championing and supporting carers, including those from diverse groups. In 2022-23, we delivered 124 different sessions across the state.

We also enjoyed connecting with carers through our program of 28 events and exhibits over the reporting year, which provided connection, conversation, respite, and fun for a suite of carers around the State. These included:

- › A Family Day at Melbourne Zoo
- › Our National Carers Week launch at Luna Park
- › The Carers Victoria 30th Anniversary event at Parliament House
- › A Multicultural Communities event held in partnerships with EECV
- › Mingle events in Bairnsdale, Bendigo, Cranbourne, Croydon, Epping, Geelong, Shepparton and Werribee.

Carer Support Groups offer valuable local connections and we continued to strengthen our support for these, updating our statewide directory, providing 110 grants for local activities, delivering tailored information and training, and progressing other strategies to help individual groups achieve sustainability.



Thanks to the support of the Collie Foundation, 115 young carers were awarded **Young Carer Scholarships** to help continue their secondary education by providing items such as school equipment, activities, and driving lessons. Young Carers were recognised in front of their families and loved ones at an awards presentation at the Melbourne Museum.

In addition, 50 carers received a funded **Carer Getaway**, thanks to the generous support of an anonymous donor, with a new partnership with Accor allowing us to provide recipients with much greater flexibility around where they took that much needed break.

Influence

Over 2022-23, we continued to advocate for change that can make a real difference to carers' lives. We were pleased to meet with both Ministers Brook and Blandthorn during their respective tenures as the Victorian Minister for Carers, the then Parliamentary Secretary Josh Bull, the Shadow Minister for Carers Mr Tim Bull, the Greens spokesperson for carers Sam Hibbins, and Rachel Payne from the Legalise Cannabis party.

We made submissions to government reviews and inquiries, including:

- › A submission to the Victorian Disability Inclusion Bill Exposure Draft, where we highlighted the once in a generation opportunity to set a new and expanded vision of disability inclusion in this state, and in doing so to recognise the importance of care relationships across the system.
- › Our pre-election platform, Carers Count Too, which sought political support in the pre-election period for practical initiatives that can improve carers lives.
- › A Victorian 2023-24 State Budget submission, with investment in carer support, cost of living relief and improved mental health and wellbeing services, and support for carers being some of the key asks.

We also contributed to a wide range of national submissions made by Carers Australia on behalf of all members of the National Carer Network.

Celebrating 30 years at Parliament House

Engaging with state parliamentarians, government officials and other decision makers was an area of growing focus for the organisation and we were pleased to host a well-attended event at Parliament House in Melbourne, taking the opportunity to both celebrate our 30th anniversary and raise awareness about key issues for carers. Overall, some 25 state MPs from across the political spectrum participated in our events and/or meetings over the reporting period.

In a tight state budget environment, we welcomed the May 2023 Victorian Government's commitment to a further four years of additional respite funding and were pleased to see it subsequently confirm that it would continue public transport concessions for carers card holders. In such a challenging financial environment, both are essential elements in helping carers in their role.



Shaping Victoria's systems

We also sought to influence the broader Victorian social care sector, with key initiatives including:

- › The Victorian Government funded Carer Friendly Places project. By end of June 2023, 208 neighbourhood houses and 49 councils had completed training that better equipped their staff to identify and support carers in their local communities.

- › The Australian Government funded network for in-home care providers to help them better understand the needs of carers as they navigate the Aged Care system and prepare for its reform.

This work, alongside sector education and training and other resources, builds the capacity of organisations to better identify, involve and connect carers within their local communities.

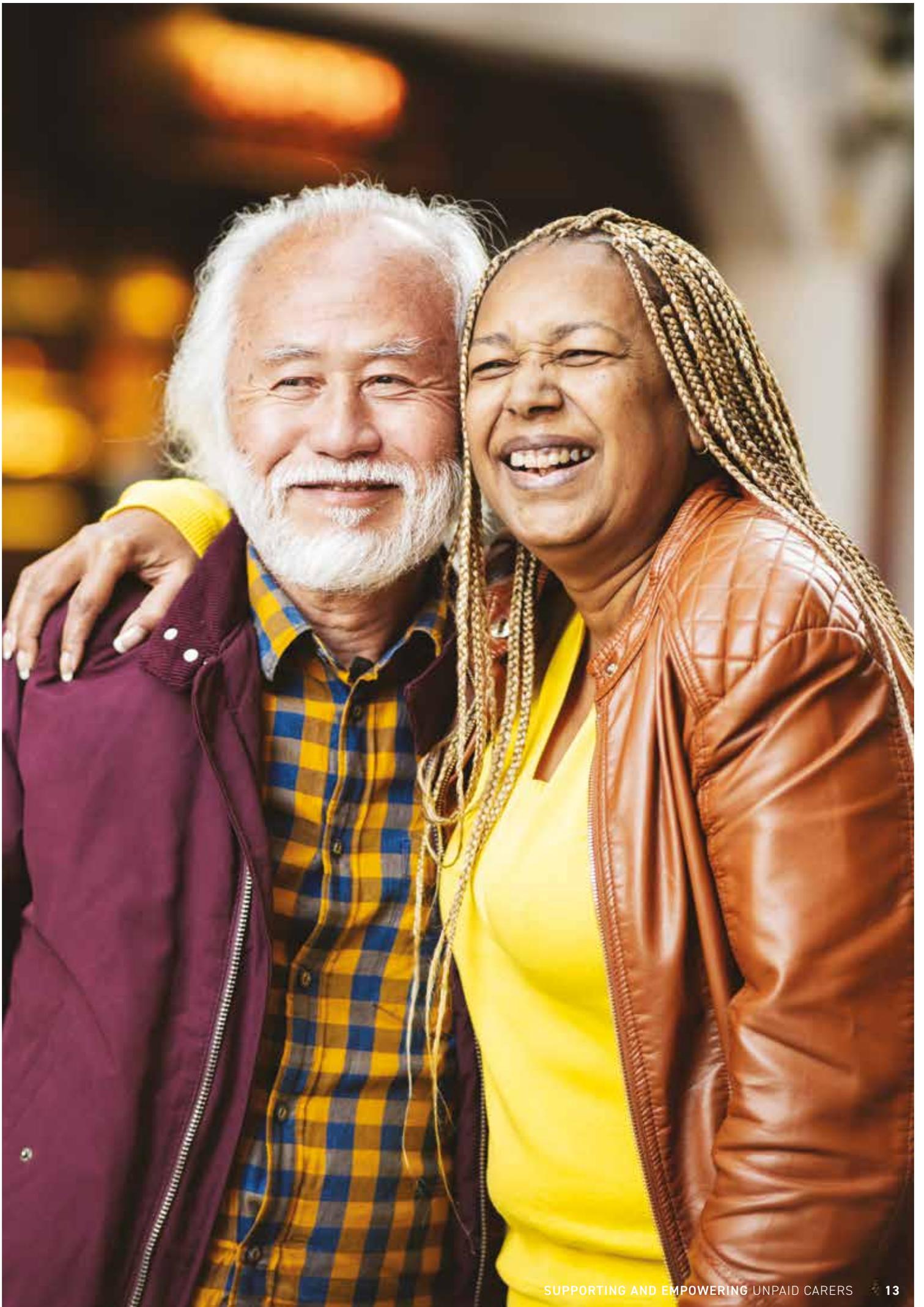
Innovation

We continued to explore and adapt innovative programs to address key systems and service gaps for carers.

The Victorian Government funded **Carer Employment Support Program** connected carers to paid employment opportunities, with neighbourhood houses a key entry point to the program. Over the reporting period, we provided a combination of individual support to 50 carers alongside the delivery of employment workshops delivering online to help build job seeking skills among the participating carers' confidence.

We also welcomed the Northwestern Melbourne Primary Health Network's continued support of the **InTouch program** in 2022-23. A program designed to help equip carers for the impact of their caring role, it has evolved over time to include adaptations such as a men's only program and one for Vietnamese speaking carers. At the end of June 2023, 51 groups had been delivered, with a completion rate of 90.6%.





Intelligence

We are committed to driving concrete improvements for carers through advocating for changes to systems, policies and funding.

Insightful, timely and targeted data collection and analysis is a lynchpin of this work, and in 2022-23 we:

- › Released analysis of the 2022 National Carer Survey alongside results of the DSS funded National Carer Health and Wellbeing survey, with a focus on the data specific to Victorian carers.

- › Conducted focus groups with over 130 Victorian carers.

We also commenced more proactively using our engagement with carers through events and activities to gather information that is shaping forward design and delivery of programs and assistance.





The Changing Picture of Victoria's Carers

Data collected through national surveys and focus groups provide insights into the changing needs of carers, particularly given the rapid changes in Australia's economy over the past year.

Key themes include:

Carers want their role to be recognised, respected and shared. They want people across the community to understand what it means and what it is like to be a carer, and to be actively included in planning, policy and system design activities that impact their roles.

Cost of living increases are affecting carers disproportionately, with 54% of carers reporting at least one significant financial stress event in the previous 12 months compared to 32.2% of other Australian adults.

Caring often impacts on capacity to participate in paid employment, exacerbating financial pressures in the short and longer term. Carers have lower rates of participation in paid employment, income levels and economic security in retirement.

The challenge of service use and system navigation is reported by most carers. The 2021 Carer Wellbeing Survey found fewer than 30% of Victorian carers had accessed respite care, financial or social support.

Ongoing service reforms in disability, aged care and mental health have not captured the needs of carers. Over one quarter of respondents to the 2022 National Carer Survey said it was difficult to find information or access mental health services.

Independence and Partnerships

Our work is underpinned by the generous support of government funders, private donors, corporate partners and sponsors.

In the reporting year, we were joined by a new General Manager – Strategic Partnerships and Business Development, who is rolling out a new strategy to extend our partnerships with both corporate and philanthropic organisations.

This work is critical to extend understanding and recognition of carers more broadly across our community, while the additional revenue generated through these efforts supported a range of assistance for carers across the State. We also explored new options for fundraising, as a way of diversifying the revenue available to fund carer events and activities.

Carers Victoria gratefully acknowledges the significant funding support of the Victorian Department of Families Fairness and Housing, the Victorian Department of Health, and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

We also recognise with thanks:

- › the support of organisations providing pro bono or in-kind support over the reporting period, in particular the pro bono assistance provided by Minter Ellison Lawyers;
- › individual donors (many of whom choose to remain anonymous), whose generous support enabled important initiatives such as carer retreats to continue;
- › the Collie Foundation and the Tarax Foundation for their support of young carers and regional initiatives respectively; and
- › the wide range of organisations who contributed to our events through participation in exhibitions and/or provision of other financial or in-kind support:
 - Accor – Work Your Way
 - Arcare Aged Care
 - Australian Multicultural Community Services
 - Bendigo Health - Mental Health Projects
 - Olinda Street Centre and Library
 - Care with Quality
 - Connecting2Australia
 - COTA



- EACH - Family Relationship Support for Carers
- East Gippsland Shire Council
- Elder Rights Advocacy
- Estia Health
- ILA Australia – Liveup
- Independence Australia
- Joanne Copeland – Author
- Latrobe Community Health Service
- Live Life Foods
- Medline Australia
- Merri Health Carer Services/ Carer Gateway
- Northeast Neighbourhood House Network
- Partners For Change (Australian Department of Health)
- RIAC – Rights Information and Advocacy Centre
- Thermomix

Supporting Diversity and Inclusion

One of our values is being Respectful and United in our Differences, with a commitment to ensure all people are heard and included.

Over the reporting year, we continued to progress work to deliver on that commitment, both within our own organisation and in our work with carers and partner organisations.

Connecting with culturally diverse carers

We have a culturally and linguistically diverse staffing group, which has positioned us well to continue refining and expanding our approach to supporting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) carers, particularly through our work in supporting carers in Melbourne's West where some 70+% of those carers are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. During the year, 53% of callers to our Statewide Advisory Service identified as being culturally and linguistically diverse.

Highlights for the reporting year included:

- › Delivery of tailored carer education to various language-based groups including Greek and two Arabic groups, and Carer Support Group Facilitator training to their group leaders.

- › Overall education was delivered to 22 groups of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, often in collaboration with Pronia and the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV).
- › Completion of the Recognising and Respecting CALD Carers Capacity Building Project, ended June 2023, which provided an opportunity to connect carers in 19 groups of culturally and linguistically diverse communities across the state through more than 80 information sessions and events.





Supporting LGBTIQA+ Carers

As a Rainbow Tick accredited organisation, Carers Victoria continued to work on strengthening its approach to building LGBTIQA+ inclusive carer supports.

We were an enthusiastic participant in the 2023 Midsumma Festival providing information and advice to attendees and continued our partnership with Queerspace to ensure LGBTIQA+ carers are provided with space and time for peer support.

Alongside providing training for all staff in this area, Carers Victoria also started building the organisation's forward priorities for expanding relationships with key LGBTIQA+ organisations and strengthening our internal approach to inclusivity, including plans to establish new approaches to strengthen connection between, inclusivity of, and advice from LGBTIQA+ staff.



Financials



As per previous years, operating income for 2022–23 primarily comprised Victorian and Australian Government funding, in addition to funding sourced through project grants, donations and sponsorships. The income figures below do not include unrealised gains of \$247,000 from investment activities over the reporting year.

The breakdown of operating income and expenses below reflects the figures confirmed via external audit following the close of the financial year on 30 June 2023.

INCOME

● \$5.5m	State Government Grants
● \$2.5m	Federal Government Grants
● \$336k	Other Grants
● \$163k	Donations/Sponsorships
● \$312k	Other Income



EXPENSES

● \$6m	Staffing Costs
● \$1.4m	Brokerage
● \$1.3m	Other Expenditure



Operating Surplus (excluding unrealised gains) \$155k





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Carers Victoria is supported by the Victorian Government and the Australian Department of Health and Ageing.

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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.