ACT Government

ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028

Final Action Plan
2026-2028

CarersACT





Acknowledgement of Country

The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

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Minister's Foreword

Carers are an essential part of our community, providing unpaid care and support to family members, friends and neighbours.



Carer's contribution is invaluable, enabling many Canberrans to live with dignity, independence and connection.

At the same time, caring can place significant demands on carers' own health, wellbeing and capacity to participate fully in work, education and community life. It is vital that carers are recognised, supported and valued for the important role they play.

The ACT Carers Strategy 2018–2028 reflects a long-standing collaboration between the ACT Government and Carers ACT, and our shared commitment to recognising carers and responding to the challenges they face. The Strategy provides a clear framework to guide government action and ensure carers' voices inform policies, services and supports across the ACT.

This Final Action Plan builds on the progress achieved through the First Action Plan and will help us keep on track to achieve the goals set out in the strategy.

This Action Plan outlines practical actions and initiatives that will deliver on the vision, outcomes and priorities of the ACT Carers Strategy. It reinforces our shared commitment to a community that cares for carers and recognises their vital role.

As Minister responsible for carers, I remain committed to supporting carers and working alongside them and the community sector to ensure carers are acknowledged, respected and supported now and into the future.

Caitlin Tough
Minister for Community Services





Introduction

The ACT Government is strongly committed to supporting and recognising carers across the Territory, acknowledging the vital role they play in the wellbeing of individuals, families and the broader community.



In the ACT, there are approximately 58,000 carers[1] including 4,545 young carers in the ACT[2] (under 25), who contribute across all areas of community life, from health and disability services to education and municipal services.

Carers are individuals who devote their time and effort to provide unpaid care to family members, friends or neighbours living with disability, a physical or mental health condition, or who are frail aged. Some provide care to children and young people through kinship and foster care arrangements. It is estimated that Canberra's carers contribute approximately $1.7 billion unpaid care each year[3].

The ACT Carers Strategy 2018-28 was co-designed with carers and provides a structured approach to guide how government and the community recognise, support and engage carers across the ACT. It sets a clear vision, priorities and outcomes aimed at improving the wellbeing of carers and the people they care for, while addressing the challenges carers face in accessing services, information and support. The Strategy also seeks to strengthen community awareness and recognition of the vital contribution carers make, and to inform the development and coordination of policies, programs and services that enhance carers' quality of life and participation in the community.

The Strategy's Action Plans have been informed by ongoing engagement with carers, including formal consultation processes and everyday interactions. This Final Action Plan also reflects the ACT Government commitments made to carers. These commitments are based on ideas put forward by carers and respond to the issues they have raised. We acknowledge and thank carers for the insights and lived experience they have shared, while also continuing to manage the daily realities and demands of their caring roles.

The Final Action Plan 2026-2028 represents the last stage of the Strategy. It sets out the actions the ACT Government and Carers ACT will take to strengthen support for carers and improve the caring landscape in the ACT, while also aligning with the priorities and directions of the National Carer Strategy 2024-2034.

The actions in this plan aim to deliver on the vision, themes and priorities of the Strategy and, in-line with the First Action Plan, are organised under the following themes: services and supports for carers; recognition and awareness; inclusion; support for young carers; and workforce and skills recognition.

1 Carers ACT Annual Report 2024-25

2 Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings

3 Carers Australia – 2022 National Carer Wellbeing Survey

Carers Strategy: Vision, Outcomes and Priorities

Consistent with the Strategy, the vision, outcomes and priorities provide the foundation for the Final Action Plan and guides its implementation.



Vision

A community that cares for carers and the people they care for. Supporting carers is investing in Canberra's future.

Outcomes

Improving community awareness of the value and contribution of carers.

We need to work to educate, build knowledge, and understand the role and work of carers in the community.

Carers need to be recognised in their own right as carers and not just as 'a significant other'. They need to be recognised by the community at large and identified professionals as being an essential part of the care team because of their comprehensive knowledge of the needs of the person they care for. This will involve improving the knowledge and understanding of the community including medical practitioners, allied health professionals, child protection, educators, police and detention officers, and will result in a positive change in mindset. A community that is proud of its carers, and proud to be a caring community, is able to support carers better.

Recognising carers' skills and knowledge

We need to recognise the skills, knowledge and experience carers have, how they translate in practice to individuals in their care and enable these to be recognised in the workforce. These skills, knowledge and experience may be able to be mapped to nationally accredited courses or recognised as prior learning to facilitate workforce engagement or recognition. In addition, improved supports need to be implemented to ensure young carers are supported to complete their formal education and achieve their aspirations.

Accepting people who are cared for as normal people in the community, regardless of any disability

We must develop strategies to increase community understanding of how to relate to people with disabilities, so that we become a more inclusive society

Embedding within the ACT community a culture that every ACT citizen has some role as, and an ability, to contribute to caring

In a caring society, everybody should feel they have an ability, or role, to contribute to the care of those in need.

Enabling carers to take better care of themselves through the provision of more support services, including physical and mental health

Carers should be proud to identify themselves as a carer, and should have access to support services needed to ensure their own health does not suffer as a result of their caring responsibilities.

Wider supports

Carers must have access to support services as needed to ensure their own health does not deteriorate due to their caring responsibilities. These supports need to be tailored for each carer and adaptable as a caring role change.

Increased awareness and skills within government agencies

We must increase the skills within ACT Government agencies, at organisational and individual levels, to work with and respect the needs of carers.





Priorities

Recognition

Recognition means respect for the skills, knowledge and contribution of carers throughout the community, government, service providers, and workplaces. This also means recognition within the legal system and by medical and other professionals, so carers are respected for their knowledge and expertise and are recognised as having valid knowledge about the people they care for. Working side-by-side with the medical and other professionals is what carers want.

Education

Education means both increasing opportunities and support for young carers to complete their formal education and achieve their aspirations. It also means recognising the valuable skills, knowledge and experience that people gain by being carers through a form of accreditation and formal recognition. The skills, knowledge, and experience of carers should also be validated in the workplace.

Information access

Improved access to relevant and current information means better access to information that meets the needs of carers.

Ongoing carer engagement

Carers need to be involved in determining their own journey. Carers know the services they need to best support them in their caring role, and these do not always align with what is perceived or offered as support. Carers need to be involved in policy formulation and review by Government and NGOs, to ensure that services continue to align with their needs

Enhanced support services

There are a range of support services that are needed or need to be enhanced, reviewed, or improved to support carers. Improving support for carers is a responsibility of all levels of government and the broader community and must take account of the diversity of carers and caring roles.

All carers' needs are treated equitably

Different types of carers have different needs, but all of these needs must be acknowledged. Carers must be treated equitably.

Implementation

Carers ACT will play a central role in engaging directly with carers and the broader service sector, ensuring that the voices, experiences and needs of carers are reflected.



The ACT Government's Health and Community Services Directorate (HCSD) will work in close partnership with Carers ACT to deliver the Final Action Plan.

HCSD will lead the coordination of implementation across ACT Government directorates, ensuring a cohesive and whole-of-government approach to supporting carers.

Carers ACT will play a central role in engaging directly with carers and the broader service sector, ensuring that the voices, experiences and needs of carers are reflected. Through strong collaboration with community organisations, service providers and carers themselves, Carers ACT will support shared ownership of the Final Action Plan and foster partnerships that enhance its delivery.

Together, HCSD and Carers ACT will promote a coordinated, inclusive and responsive approach, strengthening collaboration across government and the community to improve outcomes for carers across the ACT.

Governance, reporting and evaluation

The Strategy will be governed in partnership between the ACT Government; Carers ACT and the carer community to ensure a collaborative and inclusive approach. This partnership will support shared ownership of the Final Action Plan, strengthen accountability, and ensure implementation remains responsive to the needs of carers across the ACT and aligned with ACT Government commitments.

Progress on the Final Action Plan will be regularly reviewed and reported to the Minister for Community Services. To support this, an annual roundtable will be held to monitor progress and discuss the implementation of actions. These workshops will bring together ACT Government representatives, Carers ACT, and organisations that regularly interact with carers to share insights, identify challenges and guide continuous improvement.

HCSD will lead the coordination of reporting for the Final Action Plan, supported by Carers ACT, with ACT Government directorates contributing to an annual Ministerial Statement. This Statement will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly by the Minister for Community Services and will outline progress against actions, key achievements, and the impact of the Action Plan on carers in the ACT. To support transparency and accountability, these reports will be made publicly available so that the community can monitor progress.

A final evaluation of the Carers Strategy will be undertaken at the conclusion of the Final Action Plan. The Evaluation will be co-led by Carers ACT and the ACT Government in consultation with ACT carers. The evaluation will inform future policy direction for Carers in the ACT past 2028 and beyond.

Carers Final Action Plan 2026-2028

Theme	Description	Outcomes	Priorities	Action	Who Will Lead
Services and Support	Carers are supported to find and use services to care for their health and wellbeing.	Carers are supported to navigate and access services and supports to maintain their health and wellbeing as they undertake their caring role.	• Information access. • Enhanced support services	**1.** Explore options for a purpose-built carer wellbeing and respite hub, including identifying options for a potential site.	**Carers ACT** **Health and Community Services Directorate (HCSD)**
				2. Develop and deliver an updated Carer Handbook for foster and kinship carers in the child protection and out of home care systems.	**HCSD**
Recognition and Awareness	The important contribution carers make to the community is recognised.	• Carers feel their role is recognised by the community. • The ACT community has a greater awareness of carers and their valuable contribution to our community.	• Recognition. • All carers' needs are treated equitably.	**3.** Explore the feasibility of a carers recognition card so carers are better recognised, included, and supported in systems and services.	**Carers ACT** **HCSD**
				4. Promote annual recognition activities in the ACT to celebrate the role and contribution of carers during National Carers Week.	**Carers ACT** **HCSD**
				5. Implementation of the Government's response to the Performance Audit into Implementation of *Carers Recognition Act 2021*	**HCSD with Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD)** **Education Directorate (EDU)**

Theme	Description	Outcomes	Priorities	Action	Who Will Lead
Young Carers	• Young carers are supported to complete school and achieve their goals. • Young carers are resilient and connected to their community.	• Young carers (up to 25 years) are supported to complete their education and achieve their aspirations. • Young carers are resilient and connected to their community.	• Education • Enhanced support services	**6.** Explore the feasibility of a mentoring program that supports young carers to continue their education and find meaningful employment.	**Carers ACT**
Inclusion	• Carers are included in decisions that impact them. • The expertise carers have about the people they care for is recognised.	• Carers are engaged in government processes and systems in areas that impact them. • Carers' expertise is recognised in decision-making around the people they care for.	• Recognition • Ongoing carer engagement • Enhanced support services	**7.** Strengthen collaboration with advisory bodies and organisations representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and LGBTIQA+ communities to identify carers and enable the sharing of de-identified carer data and insights. **8.** Share carer related data collected through the University of Canberra's Living Well in the ACT Region survey to improve evidence on the experience and perspective of carers in the ACT.	**Carers ACT** **HCSD** **CMTEDD**
Workforce and Skills Recognition	• Recognise carers' knowledge and skills in workplaces. • Support carers to balance work with their caring role.	• Carers' knowledge and skills are recognised in the workforce. • Carers can balance workforce participation with their caring role.	• Recognition • Education	**9.** Promote the Carer Inclusive Workplace Initiative to ACT Public Service staff to encourage workplaces to use the resources to collectively support colleagues who are carers.	**CMTEDD**

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