Carers Recognition Act 2021

Guide for non-government organisations

What does the Carers Recognition Act do?

In the ACT, around 58,000 carers provide unpaid care to a person who has disability, an ongoing medical condition, mental illness, or is frail and aged. They can also be foster or kinship carers for children and young people. The *Carers Recognition Act 2021* (Act) describes the connection between a carer and the person they care for as a 'care relationship'.

Carers often provide care quietly, behind the scenes, with little help or support. They might struggle to balance their caring role with their goals, family, health and work. The Act:

- helps people to see how carers contribute to our community
- creates principles to guide the relationship between a carer and the person they care for, and
- requires agencies that provide carer support services to report each year on how they have upheld those principles (see below).

The care relationship principles

The Act outlines a set of principles about care relationships. These help us to respect and acknowledge carers' diverse support needs.

The care relationship principles make clear that a carer should be recognised as:

- an individual with their own needs
- a carer, and
- someone who has knowledge of the person receiving care.

The principles also refer to the complex needs of certain carers (such as young carers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers, LGBTIQ+ carers, carers with different cultures and languages, and carers with disability). These needs should be considered when providing support.

For a full list of the principles, see Part 3 of the *Carers Recognition Act 2021*.

Is my non-government organisation (NGO) covered by the Carers Recognition Act?

The Act applies to NGOs that receive ACT Government funding (directly or from another NGO) so they can:

- provide support programs aimed at people in a care relationship, or
- fund another NGO to provide such programs.

If an NGO is not funded to deliver this kind of program, it does not have obligations under the Act. However, the Act may still provide a best practice framework for how to raise awareness, consult and report on the needs of people in a care relationship.

My NGO is covered by the Carers Recognition Act – what do we need to do?

1. Raise awareness

An NGO should ensure its staff, and people who receive targeted carer support from the NGO, are aware of and understand the care relationship principles. The NGO's staff must uphold the principles.

NGOs should consider the principles when developing their own human resources (HR) policies. This includes letting staff know how the NGO can support them if they are a carer.

2. Consult

When an NGO develops or reviews a program aimed at people in a care relationship, it should consult with carers receiving support from the NGO and an agency that represents carers (such as Carers ACT).

The type of consultation may vary, depending on the nature of the program. For example, an NGO could:

- hold a forum to discuss and develop new carer policy
- speak with carers when it develops, evaluates or reviews a carer support program.

3. Report

An NGO should report each year on how it complied with the Act. This is required by the Act. An NGO funded by the ACT Government should:

- give a copy of its report to the directorate that funds the NGO, and
- put the report on its website.

If the NGO is funded by another NGO, it should consider making its report available to the public.

Reporting could, for example, describe consultation that was done with carers and a carer representative agency, to inform a new service or review a current one.

Reporting should also include a statement about how the NGO has upheld and promoted the care relationship principles for its carer employees. For example, this could describe carer-friendly flexible working options and how the NGO reflects the principles in its HR policies.

The ACT Government website has more information, including an optional report template – Carers Recognition Act: guidance for agencies that provide carer support.

For more guidance on reporting obligations, see the *Carers Recognition Regulation 2021*.