



Social Inclusion and Carers in Tasmania

A Carers Tasmania Position Paper

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Social Exclusion and Carers

Carers of people with disabilities or long term conditions often experience social exclusion, due to systemic and inter-related barriers which prevent their social and economic participation.

Carers are those people who provide unpaid care for family members, neighbours or friends who are unable to live independently in the community due to disability, chronic illness or health conditions, who are frail and aged or who have palliative care needs.

Carers usually provide some kind of ongoing assistance to the care-recipient with the core activities of self-care, mobility and communication.

People take on care roles for any number of reasons, but each care situation depends upon there being a pre-existing relationship, whether partnership, kinship or friendship.

Carers are not paid support workers, but a small percentage of carers receive some form of income assistance from the Government, such as Carer Allowance or Carer Payment.



Long term carers often suffer from poor health and wellbeing, lack of ability to participate in employment, and have increased costs from providing care.

If left unsupported, these factors often combine to result in deep and persistent social and economic poverty.

Carers contribute greatly to the wellbeing and social inclusion of the people they care for, but this contribution often disadvantages the carer as the time and the cost of providing care becomes a barrier which prevents social participation¹.

¹ IMC-Link (2008) *Report on the profile of carers in Tasmania*. Hobart: Carers Tasmania.

Economic Value of Care

Carers make a profound contribution to the Tasmanian economy. Research by IMC-Link² calculated that replacement of formal care with informal care would incur a cost to the State of over **\$1.2 billion per annum**.



Increasing demand for carers will further add to the social and economic value of the unpaid care provided.

This is due to factors including an ageing population and the improved lifespan of people with disabilities.

Yet, projections into the future need for carers by IMC-Link indicated that need for informal care will increase by an expected 47-52 per cent by 2028.

The number of people available to provide care is most likely to drop by around 23-24 per cent.

Barriers to Inclusion

The time needed to care, the cost of providing care, and the isolation created by lack of appropriate supports to maintain community contact, all create barriers to prevent inclusion.

Many Carers also consistently express a desire for a higher level of social equity for the person they care for³, so that they too can enjoy a real quality of life based on good health and meaningful participation.

Primary carers inevitably have a high workload which greatly restricts their ability to participate in community life, in employment and in education.

These lost opportunities over time lead to significant long term disadvantage.

Yet, all carers face barriers to social participation. Inadequate respite services, financial restrictions and personal-impact issues such as stress, depression, illness and injury are the most common issues causing social isolation.

Inter-relation of barriers creates a 'snowball' effect as core issues accumulate to disadvantage and isolate carers from the rest of the community.

Unsupported caring may also have an inter-generational effect, as systemic household poverty is proven to have a flow-on impact on the wellbeing and life opportunities of all children in the family.

² IMC-Link (2008) *Report on the profile of carers in Tasmania*. Hobart: Carers Tasmania.

³ Ashton, A., McGrath, D. (2008) *'Have your say' ACT election survey report*. Canberra: Carers ACT.

Suggestions for overcoming barriers to Social Inclusion:

- Innovative programs to support re-connection for isolated carers
- Improved access to substitute care
- Health promotion schemes for carers
- Increased access to transport
- Flexible work options for carers
- Opportunities to access education and support in financial planning

About Carers Tasmania

Carers Tasmania has a constitutional mandate to represent the needs of family carers. The organisation was founded by carers and continues to be led by carers. Governance includes a Board which has members who contribute professional skills in addition to current or past experience of caring situations or an affinity with carers.

Carers Tasmania is a non-profit, community based, incorporated association and registered charity dedicated to improving the quality of life of the estimated 69,500⁴ family carers living in Tasmania.

Carers are those people who are providing unpaid care for family members or friends with disabilities, mental illness, chronic conditions or illnesses, who have palliative care needs, or who are aged and frail.

Carers Tasmania is the only organisation completely dedicated to supporting the needs and representing the views of carers throughout Tasmania.

Carers Tasmania is committed to progressing and expanding innovative carer support services for the benefit of all Tasmanians. Accordingly, a strong focus on rural and remote regions is embedded in all program design and development.

Carers Tasmania provides a diversity of services across all areas of the state, including counselling, information, education and training, health and wellbeing support, and social support.

Carers with diverse needs, such as young carers, Indigenous carers and carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) can access specialist support services especially designed to better meet their needs.

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⁴ ABS (2003) *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers*. Cat No 4430.0.