

Goal 1 : Better Recognition for carers	Observations/Comments	Recommendations
<p>Carers being recognized and acknowledged for their caring responsibilities</p>	<p>Of the 2.6 million carers referenced in the strategy, only 104 thousand received a Centrelink Carer pension. Two million carers do not fit the 'requirements' that Centrelink apply to carers</p> <p>My wife was a full time carer for many years before 'qualifying' as a carer with Centrelink because of the limited and inflexible requirements currently being inflicted on carers.</p> <p>Many life-critical activities of a carer are explicitly excluded from Centrelink's requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ None of the images depicted on the cover page of the strategy would be classed by Centrelink as valid carer duties. It is ironic that these images are used to depict carers when they are all things which Centrelink does not value and will not take into account ○ Food preparation – specifically excluded by Centrelink – is actually a critical part of the caring process. Apart from correct nutrition and safe food handling, many medications require avoidance of specific foods or correct timing of meals to avoid serious medical issues ○ Activities such as shopping and/or organization/paying of bills etc are also excluded from Centrelink's recognized and approved 'carer' functions. Without these however, there will be no food, no electricity, no telephone – the person being cared for can 	<p>Any real intention to better recognize and acknowledge carers must take into account the unique and varied nature of the carer role.</p> <p>This would include (but not be limited to)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recognizing a wider range of activities. ✓ Recognizing caring from a distance ✓ Recognizing individual carer circumstances <p>The current tick-box mentality is insulting and un-insightful and in total contrast to the stated goal of Better recognition for carers</p>

	<p>be seriously at risk. Most carers can see this but unless the strategy works to also bring such recognition then this goal will remain just a motherhood statement.</p> <p>Carers are expected to be completely flexible with their time and the care they provide but government organizations such as Centrelink show absolutely no corresponding flexibility for carers, requiring attendance when in poor health, for example, at Centrelink offices with termination of carer benefits the result if this does not occur.</p> <p>In the 21st century, many carers are discriminated against because their care must operate at a distance rather than first hand. I personally may spend two or three hours a night on the phone providing emotional support and/or advice and/or problem solving or may be required to liaise with tradesmen, officials and so forth – none of which is considered valid by Centrelink because I am not physically present and therefore, I am not considered to be a carer. There are many, many carers in this situation – any intention to truly recognize carers must take this into account.</p>	<p>(see previous page)</p>
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<p>Carers being actively consulted and their needs considered in the development and implementation of policies, programs and services affecting them</p>	<p>Currently decisions appear to be made about or for carers by those with no real experience of the stresses and demands placed on carers.</p>	<p>Actual carers must be part of advisory committees and boards to ensure that future decisions are made by those with insight into the carer role and experiences</p> <p>Priority should be given to employing those with personal experience in caring when filling government positions that deal with carers</p>
<p>Carers being recognised by health and community care professionals as partners in the provision of care</p>	<p>There is little or no recognition of the highly complex relationships binding the carer with those that they care for and little understanding of the burdens of guilt, failure and so forth that most carers carry with them</p>	<p>In addition to health and community care professionals, law enforcement groups such as Judges, Justices and Magistrates also require an educational program to bring them into touch with the true face of ‘caring’.</p> <p>Specialized educational programs should be setup to assist defense and prosecution counsels better evaluate the real-life positions that carers find themselves in.</p>

Goal 2 : Better support to help carers work	Observations/Comments	Recommendations
<p>Carers being supported to balance caring and work responsibilities at all stages of caring</p>	<p>Any carer (or partner of a carer) attempting to run a home business is bombarded with excessive paperwork and complex accounting on top of other workload and responsibilities. As an (unrecognized) carer I am required to perform double expense recording to satisfy the unique requirements of Centrelink to avoid my wife's carer payment being suspended.</p>	<p>Work with carers to reduce the resource costs involved with running home businesses</p> <p>Recognize the limited time available to carers by introducing more flexible points of contact and more friendly time requirements.</p>
<p>Eligible carers who are unable to work being supported by the income support system</p>	<p>The key point with this goal is the word 'eligible' – Centrelink requirements ensure that most carers are ineligible. As indicated above, most carers – 2.5 of the 2.6 million – are not supported by the income support system.</p> <p>Unlike all other hard working individuals in the workforce, carers have no superannuation and therefore no retirement future.</p>	<p>As per Goal 1, re-evaluate the entire eligibility requirements disaster to take into account real-world caring.</p> <p>Introduce a superannuation strategy specifically for carers including government contributions.</p>

Goal 3 : Better information and support for carers	Observations/Comments	Recommendations
Carers having improved access to appropriate and timely information that enables them to make informed decisions about support options as their needs change		
Carers being supported with appropriate, accessible and timely services that respond to their individual circumstances	<p>The amount of preparation and paperwork required for respite is excessive and time consuming. A similar problem applies to the ‘companion card’, and again with applications for disabled parking permits</p> <p>Those with Power-of-Attorney are required to carry large amounts of paperwork about with them.</p> <p>Instead of making carers lives easier, the rules, requirements and corresponding punishments (cutting off of Centrelink payments) only make carers lives more stressful, more tiring and more torturous</p> <p>Those caring for two people (e.g. parents) are often in most need of respite since they are providing at least double the amount of care. However, many facilities offer only one respite bed. Having to place people in multiple facilities is not only more paperwork (with the associated difficulties of finding additional medical coverage) but often prohibitive due to the impact of separation on those being cared for.</p>	<p>There should be a more automatic process to obtain respite funding from Carer respite rather than the three or more phone calls over a number of weeks.</p> <p>A simpler system is required – possibly some form of Carer Card – to reduce the amount of information that needs to be collected and/or supplied and/or carried by carers</p> <p>Suspending carer payments or requiring carers to attend Centrelink offices while ill is not appropriate and not in consideration of individual circumstances. This should only be actioned as a last resort – not a first resort.</p> <p>Facilities should be required to maintain at least two respite rooms to facilitate the accommodation of emotionally dependent pairs – e.g. husband and wife.</p>

<p>Improvements in data and research on carers' needs to support better services and increased accountability</p>	<p>The 2.6 million carers figure referred to in the strategy is a figure that dates back to 2003. Given our aging population (amongst other influencers) this figure is liable to be considerably higher.</p>	<p>If this strategy is to be successful, it is imperative that timely and accurate carer statistics should be acquired.</p>
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Goal 4 : Better support to help carers work	Observations/Comments	Recommendations
Carers having the resources and opportunities to participate in education and training		
Carers being supported with the training and skills they need to undertake their caring responsibilities		

Goal 5 : Better health and wellbeing for carers	Observations/Comments	Recommendations
<p>Better support for carers’ physical, mental health and emotional wellbeing at all stages of caring</p>	<p>According to an investigation by Deakin University, carers have the lowest self-esteem and highest levels of depression of those surveyed – including the long term unemployed.</p>	<p>Increased opportunities for counseling should be made available to provide support additional ongoing support to carers.</p> <p>A specialized (and freely provided) private health care fund should be established and made available to carers.</p> <p>Simpler emergency respite options need to be defined that cut through red tape and enable carers to pull in support services with a minimum of paperwork and effort.</p>
<p>Carers having the capacity and opportunity to participate in community and social life and to balance caring with other aspects of life</p>	<p>Many tourist locations offer discounts for pensioners however carers - even those on a carer pension - are required to pay full price. For a carer living on a small carer pension, this precludes them from entry.</p> <p>Many community and social events occur on public holidays. However, on these days the few services that most carers managed to have implemented do not run. While paid (council) carers are having public holidays, those carers who give their lives for the well-being of others are actually required to work harder.</p>	<p>Carers need a standardized Carer card with guaranteed discounts.</p> <p>For carers to have any hope of participating in life, they need to be better supported on public holidays.</p>

Goal 6 : Protection of carers (Added Goal)	Observations/Comments	Recommendations
<p>Ensure carers have a future</p>	<p>In many cases, carers exchange their own ‘future’ for the ‘present’ well-being of those that they care for. Once the caring process has finished they are left without any sense of self or direction and with little put aside for their own retirement.</p> <p>Carers are often forced into balancing the wishes of those that they are caring for with their own or societies wishes and through isolation and depression and a lifetime’s relationship are often unable to adopt the ‘simple’ course of action that those who have no real experience of the situations deem appropriate.</p> <p>Carers all too often, through the lack of insight or understanding by professional services or the Justice system, can find themselves scarred for life. The case of Agnieszka Miller is a good example of this. Here we have a chronically depressed and isolated woman caring for a parent who was clearly manipulative and domineering and who continuously and constantly refused medical attention - placing the entire burden of care on her daughter (Ms Miller). A court system with no real understanding of the complex relationships experienced by such carers sentenced her to five years jail (suspended after one year). This carer, essentially bullied and abused during the caring relationship, now will hold both personal guilt as well as the guilt inappropriately leveled on her by our so-called ‘Justice System’.</p>	<p>Build into the Carer support package some form of Superannuation so that they are able to look forward to some sort of support when they are older</p> <p>Re-training schemes should be provided for carers to help them adjust to their post-caring lives once the role of carer has ended – for whatever reason</p> <p>Carers should be entitled to recognition for their carer experience as prior learning and experience. As an example, a carer who has been looking after frail-aged and/or dementia affected parents should be given a fast-track accreditation to Certificate III in Aged Care</p> <p>Better education of the Justice system to ensure that travesties of justice such as the treatment of Agnieszka Miller are avoided in the future.</p>

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