



## Submission to the Department of Social Services on designing the new integrated carer support service

16 June 2016

### About us

The Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) is Australia's peak national body linking professionals working across the multidisciplinary fields of ageing. Since 1964, we have connected professionals to help them connect and collaborate on evidence based approaches to ageing. AAG's goal is to expand knowledge of ageing in order to improve the experience of ageing. With over 1,000 members across every State and Territory in Australia, our members include researchers, geriatricians, nurses, allied health professionals, aged care practitioners, policy makers and other gerontology experts. AAG has 17 Collaborating Research Centres that represent all major research in ageing in Australia

### Endorsement of Carers Australia submission

AAG endorses the Carers Australia submission to this consultation.

### Endorsement of the National Aged Care Alliance election position

AAG endorses the National Aged Care Alliance (NACA) position on supporting informal carers, which is set out in their [Position Statement for the 2016 Federal Election](#). In summary, NACA advocates that any plan for carer support should include:

- Delivering the plan in a way that is complementary to aged care reforms.
- Developing effective coordination and referral pathways between My Aged Care and the new National Carer Gateway and existing carer support services.
- A preventative approach to reduction in carer stress and burden throughout the carer journey.
- A holistic approach to individual carer support that is consumer-directed.
- Aged care staff education, support and training in relation to the *Carer Recognition Act (2010)* and to working effectively with informal carers.
- Amendment to the *User Rights Principles of the Aged Care Act* to include a Charter of Rights and Responsibilities for Carers of Home Care Package and residential care recipients.
- More flexible support to enable carers of older people to participate in employment, education and volunteer work.
- A means to target difficult-to-reach cohorts of carers and ensure their needs are identified, and appropriate and meaningful support and information provided.



## AAG comments

AAG reiterates some of the key points made by Carers Australia and NACA, and raises some additional issues for consideration below:

### 1. *Carers of older people and older carers*

We acknowledge that the proposed carer support service is designed to address the general needs of all carers. However, we believe there should be greater consideration given to identifying and addressing the specific needs of carers of older people and older carers given that:

- The Productivity Commission report [Caring for Older Australians](#) (2011) found that *'informal carers provide the majority of direct care to older Australians and often play a key role in the co-ordination of formal care services. Their role is not only fundamental to those they care for, but for the functioning of the aged care system overall.'*
- Subsequent research by Briony Dow (AAG Board Member) and others about ['What do older Australians want?'](#) clearly identified the need for aged care services to work in partnership with and support carers.<sup>i</sup>
- The Deloitte Access Economics report for Carers Australia on [The economic value of informal care in Australia](#) found that there were 401,500 carers aged 65-74 years and 267,400 carers aged over 75 years in 2015.

### 2. *Integration with the aged care system*

Given the integral role that carers play in the functioning of the aged care system (discussed above), we believe there should be greater consideration given to how the proposed carer support service will intersect with the aged care system. For example:

- the [My Aged Care](#) gateway is likely to be a key source of information for carers of older people. However, there has been public criticism of My Aged Care and improvements may be required to make it more effective for carers. The Aged Care Sector Committee's [Aged Care Roadmap](#) (2016) also specifically identifies the need to *'establish links between the national carer gateway and My Aged Care such that they complement each other.'*
- people conducting aged care assessments through the Regional Assessment Service or Aged Care Assessment Teams need to understand the importance of supporting carers, and have sufficient training and resources to ensure they make appropriate referrals for carers.
- information about the role and needs of carers should be included in training for aged care workers (in both home care and residential care settings).



### **3. Older people with special needs**

Older people with ‘special needs’ are defined in section 11.3 of the [Aged Care Act 1997](#) and include people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; who live in rural or remote areas; who are financially or socially disadvantaged; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. In addition, we would include people with dementia.

We reiterate that there are additional challenges in supporting carers of older people with special needs, and older carers who have special needs themselves. Additional funding may be required to provide services that are tailored to their needs, to allow longer time with service providers, and for other relevant resources (e.g. interpreters).

### **4. Need for ageing research and evaluation**

Funding is required to co-design and conduct ageing research and evaluation that will deliver evidence-based improvements to supporting carers for older people and older carers. This type of research and evaluation requires a multidisciplinary approach that involves collaboration across relevant areas (such as medical, psychosocial, allied health, finance, technology, design and policy).

However, just ‘doing the research’ is not enough. Funding is also required to support knowledge transfer, and the translation of research into policy and practice. Further information is available in AAG’s recent [submission on the Medical Research Future Fund](#).

### **5. Elder abuse**

In September 2015, the New South Wales parliament commenced an inquiry into elder abuse. The final reporting date for the [NSW inquiry](#) is 23 June 2016. In February 2016, the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) commenced a new inquiry on ‘*Protecting the Rights of Older Australians from Abuse*’. The first issues paper is expected on 15 June 2016 and the final reporting date for the [ALRC inquiry](#) is May 2017.

We anticipate that both inquiries will consider the role of carers in preventing, identifying and reporting, or committing elder abuse. Further information about this is available in AAG’s [submission to the NSW inquiry into elder abuse](#). The new integrated carer support service should have regard to any relevant recommendations made by the NSW and ALRC inquiries.



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## Authorisation

This submission has been authorised by the Chief Executive Officer and the President.

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<sup>i</sup> Dow, B, Sparrow, P, Moore, K, Gaffy, E and Yates, I (2013), 'What do Older Australians Want?'  
*Australasian Journal on Ageing*, Vol. 32 No. 4 December 2013, p.236-240.