**Organisational overview**

Intereach works together with children, families, older people, carers, people with disabilities and communities to provide services, support and information throughout the Riverina Murray region of NSW and Northern Victoria. Intereach has offices and Community Hubs in Albury, Bendigo Buronga, Cootamundra, Corowa, Deniliquin, Finley, Griffith, Hay and Wagga Wagga . The Intereach vision is *strong supported communities* and we work toward this through our purpose, which is to:

* strengthen and improve social and personal well-being for individuals, families and communities;
* promote and facilitate access, equality and social justice; and
* deliver services locally that are of quality and have value.

Discussion Questions

* In relation to the program overview, do you believe that the objectives, outcomes and delivery principles are appropriate for the services required to be delivered under each program? Do you believe that the services proposed to be delivered at the national, regional and local level are targeted appropriately?
* A key factor in the effectiveness of regional hubs will rely upon their ability to understand the local service landscape and identify service gaps. If you were operating a regional hub, how would you undertake service mapping[[1]](#footnote-1) for your region? How would you ensure that you had captured a complete view of the available supports for carers in your region?

Intereach has reviewed the Delivering an Integrated Carers support service – A draft model for the delivery of carer support services, and provides the following comments by way of response.

* Generally supportive of the objectives and delivery principles articulated in the framework. The types of supports proposed are considered appropriate.
* Provides a holistic approach to service delivery that is welcomed. The suite of programs targeted for carers supports a strength based and wellness and reablement approach which builds upon carer strength and supports them with issues that are relevant to them as opposed to being a reactive and Band-Aid approach.
* Gives multiple entry points that allow the carer to choose the most appropriate/preferential mode of seeking support/information.
* Builds on the existing CRCC framework where local and regional approaches are already in place. Under the plan, the National infrastructure will underpin a consistent and system wide platform and support an early intervention and proactive approach to carer support.
* Early intervention approach is proactive for carers and removes the reactive and crisis nature of carer support currently available from Carer Respite Centres. The

approach supports carers to prevent the crisis cycle reoccurring but also has the ability to respond where unavoidable crisis is present

* The targeted education element is a valued addition, with this role being difficult to achieve under the current structure. A dedicated and valued focus in this area will ensure that education becomes an integral part of the suite of services available to carers.

**National Approach**

The National approach to registration of carers is supported, allowing for the flexibility of contact and mobility of carer identification across other funded programs and service types.

The portability of carer identification across State boundaries allows for mobility of carers and the removal of “telling my story” numerous times

**Question**: How will the connection between National and Regional Hubs be undertaken? Will there be differing 1800 numbers or an integrated connection point?

**Question:** How will national branding of information interface with the identity of local providers operating Regional hubs?Stand alone branding not helpful in rural and remote areas when attempting to engage with hard to reach carers who want service provision by local providers.

**Regional Hubs**

Intereach has had experience with carer respite service delivery for over 15 years and has developed an extensive understanding and knowledge base of carer issues in regional areas. The importance of local services being delivered by local people cannot be underestimated and the proposed Regional hubs and Local service coordination is consistent with this.

Service mapping is a key element of existing CRCC services operated by Intereach. Our local knowledge of existing systems is underpinned by a robust networking approach that allows the service to understand the service systems and maintain the currency of information throughout. The local approach to service delivery to Carers ensures a deep understanding of the system and the ability to seek solutions from the sector for carers issues outside the norm. This ability to be responsive to the need at hand is key to effective carer support. Service gaps are identified and engagement with providers at the local level has the ability to result in innovative and responsive solutions for carer issues not previously catered for. Partnerships and collaborative working arrangements at the local level have assisted with this. Maintaining data bases and having a visible presence in local communities supports this.

**Question :** What boundaries would be utilised to form the basis of the regional hubs eg; state boundaries, Local Area Health Districts, Education precincts?

**Digital Carer Account**

The element of self assessment by carers and follow up by regional hubs raises questions around anonymity and ability for carers to consent to follow up contact. This initiative is supported with the proviso that the carer remains in control of their own information and is not contacted without their consent.

Discussion Questions

* It has been identified that outcomes measurement will be essential for a future model. Outcomes measurement involves identifying how effective services are in achieving a particular objective. This commonly takes the form of a questionnaire which helps to assess aspects the carers role. However, there will be a careful balance in measuring outcomes, whilst not placing undue burden on a carer to answer multiple questionnaires, particularly where they may be accessing more than one service. What are some ways that outcomes could be measured and these issues addressed?
* While this model will seek to help more carers, it will be important to ensure that quality services are being delivered. What would you view as the essential components of a future quality framework?

**Outcome Measures**

Traditional surveying methods for carers focus on wellbeing and immediate support satisfaction. More global approaches to measuring outcomes for carers need to be considered to truly assess the value of the effectiveness of service delivery to carers. The ability for carers to continue or enter the paid workforce for example would be an outcome measure that would reflect how supportive the range of carers support options really are. Shifting the focus on carer wellbeing to a broader emphasis on their mental health could be another indicator of a successful carer support program. Outcome measures need to explore the broader social impacts of the caring role and ensure that carers are not further disadvantaged by the carer role they occupy.

**Future Quality Framework**

Effective governance structures are essential for overseeing quality carer services. A nationally accredited system with associated standards will be useful to monitor practice across a diverse geographical area and population cohorts. Carer feedback should be the primary source used to assess service quality as it is their experience that can truly inform better practice and continuous improvement.

**Completed by: Justine Summers | Executive Director | Intereach**

**Phone** 1300 488 226 | **Direct** 02 60517808 | **Mobile** 0437 578 601

**Address** Suite 1/553 David Street Albury NSW 2640 | **Website** [www.intereach.com.au](http://www.intereach.com.au/)

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)