

Mr Finn Pratt
Secretary
Department of Social Services
Tuggeranong Office Park
Soward Way (cnr Athllon Drive)
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Pratt

Please find attached a copy of a submission on the proposed draft model for the delivery of Carer Support Services on behalf of the members of the NSW Carers Advisory Council.

The Carers Advisory Council welcomes the release of the draft service delivery model for an Integrated Carer Support Service (ICSS). The Council considers the development and implementation of the ICSS to be of great importance and would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Officer contact may be established with Helen McFarlane on 8753 9339.

Yours sincerely

Jason Kara (on behalf of the Council secretariat)
Director, Carers, Ageing and Disability Council
Participation and Inclusion, Program and Service Design

NSW Carers Advisory Council submission on the draft model for the delivery of carer support services

About the NSW Carers Advisory Council

The Carers Advisory Council (the Council) is established under the *NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010* to advance the interests of carers in NSW. It provides advice to the NSW Minister for Disability Services on legislation, policy and other matters relating to carers. The majority of Council members are carers. More information is available online at: www.facs.nsw.gov.au/reforms/carers/nsw_carers_advisory_council

1. Comments on Discussion Questions

Question 1: *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?*

The Council supports in principle the four objectives of the proposed model. In particular, the Council agrees with the importance of engaging carers early, ensuring that there is no 'wrong door', and the benefits to be delivered from improved information sharing and infrastructure.

While the potential administrative and economic benefits from delivering services via centralised online and telephone platforms are recognised, the Council notes:

- there are many carers who would prefer and benefit more from accessing local, face-to-face services. Council members feel this is particularly the case for older male carers and Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) carers
- in relation to counselling, it is unclear whether the model will include funding for local face-to-face counselling
- service providers in the regions report difficulties in attracting and retaining suitably qualified staff due to resource constraints. As such, any redirection of resources from local, face-to-face services in the regions may result in adverse outcomes
- the model does not elaborate how programs will tailor engagement to different carers groups (for example: young, Aboriginal, CALD and regional carers). Given the direction to streamline service delivery, Council believes that this is important for the overall success of the model.

More generally, the Council notes:

- the Program Overview does not elaborate on the specific and diverse needs of carers, the importance of which is recognised by the *Carer Recognition Act*. Council recommends the objectives refer to the Act and include statements about the individual needs and circumstances of carers, carers' cultural needs and carers wellbeing.
- the Program Overview does not elaborate on support for people transitioning out of their carer role. Such support could be necessary in a variety of circumstances. For example, assistance could be provided to older carers who are planning for a time when they may no longer be able to provide care, or to young carers, as their caring responsibilities evolve through the various life stages.
- the Program overview does not address how the model would work for carers who may be caring for multiple people (for example, caring for both a child participating in the NDIS and an ageing parent in the aged care system). The Council is interested to learn how will the integrated system cope with this situation.
- the Council notes that the need for services such as training, counselling, peer support respite and information have been recognised, but that there is limited detail.

Examples include defining coaching and mentoring, and explaining how coaches and mentors will be trained and funded. Council suggests that further detail is needed regarding how respite will be funded under this model as the draft model does not provide much clarity to carers about how access to this valued support will change for them under the proposed model.

Question 2: *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 for your region? How would you ensure that you had captured a complete view of the available supports for carers in your region?*

In undertaking service mapping for a region, the Council recommends that DSS considers consulting:

- funded organisations in the region
- relevant peak bodies
- the Carer Gateway website
- carer support groups and carer organisations
- Aboriginal and CALD organisations in the region
- carer organisations
- Government agencies operating in the region, including the Department of Family and Community Services, health departments, Centrelink, the NDIA, aged care and local councils
- community and neighbourhood Centres
- local elected representatives
- local health networks and health service providers
- local schools.

The Council has concerns about how the regional hubs will work for carers and providers away from the centre of the hub. Council suggests that funding should be considered for outreach to isolated areas. The Council also notes that the composition of the local workforce is a significant determinant of the local service landscape, particularly in the regions. For example, in Western NSW, there is an acute shortage of allied health practitioners. As such, non-government service providers find it difficult to recruit staff and provide such services. Service gaps in the regions could therefore be identified by holding consultations with local service providers and the carers themselves.

In addition to the Commonwealth funded programs listed in the model, there are state and territory funded carer services. The Council recommends DSS work with State and Territory Governments in mapping services and identifying service gaps.

Question 3: *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 of 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?*

The Council agrees that a well-designed questionnaire is a helpful tool in measuring outcomes. To make it easier for carers, the questionnaire could be delivered in multiple languages and formats – for example, in multilingual forms delivered via paper, online or over the phone. Carers peer networks and support groups could serve as an avenue for questionnaires or open discussions about carer experiences.

At the local level, a basic action research framework with reporting against plan/ act/ observe/ reflect cycles can be used in reporting to show how the service is continuing to evolve and respond to needs of carers. This has been successfully used in other Commonwealth government programs (for example, 'Reconnect').

In the Council's initial submission on the ICSS service concept, Council noted the mixed feedback received from carers regarding both the Carer Gateway and My Aged Care, and the importance of using this feedback and learnings in designing the ICSS.

Question 4: *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?*

Ideally, future quality frameworks would be co-designed with carers. There should also be a clear and transparent conflict resolution and complaints process.

General Comments

With reforms such as the NDIS underway, the community sector in NSW is undergoing significant transition. Accordingly, many state-funded carer services will become part of the NDIS or make changes to their operations in the near future. It remains unclear as to what will happen to currently funded Commonwealth Carer Services – carers in NSW are concerned about the future of the services they use.

The Council notes that both disability and aged care services, along with other Government services, are client-focussed. That is, funding is directly provided to clients to allow them to become purchasers of services. The model as it currently stands does not seem to apply the same principle to carers.

While the principles of consumer-directed care are supported, the potential impact on carers remains to be seen. The ICSS will be critical to carers – further detail about this model is needed and it will also be important to monitor how carers fare under the NDIS and other models of consumer-directed care.

The Council notes that further information is needed in regards to:

- funding committed to the ICSS
- how the ICSS will work with State and Territory Governments
- how the regional hubs will work – including information on what would constitute a 'region'
- how services offered at national, regional and local levels will interface with each other
- how the model is proposing to work with carers to update them on developments and ensure continuity of support
- what resources the model will have to cover any service gaps
- how continuity of support or no-disadvantage for carers currently accessing services will be ensured.

Future involvement of the Carers Advisory Council

The Council invites the Department of Social Services to contact them through Council secretariat, if any clarification is required on this submission, or if there are future opportunities for the Council to inform the development and delivery of the ICSS. The Council consider the ICSS to be a priority, and would welcome further consultation with DSS at a future meeting or via teleconference.

To discuss this further, please contact Jason Kara, Director – Ageing, Carers and the Disability Council in FACS on 9716 3413 or email the Council at NSWCarersAdvisoryCouncilSecretariat@facs.nsw.gov.au.