

# Carers Tasmania



Response to the  
Integrated Carer Support Service:  
Regional Delivery Partners  
A draft on the regional delivery  
model

May 2018

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Carers Tasmania welcomes the DSS “Integrated Carer Support Services: Regional Delivery Partners, A draft on the regional delivery model” discussion paper, and the opportunity to respond, and have included here 2 further Tasmanian service providers’ perspective - Care Assess and Care Forward (separate divisions of Care Assessment Consultants Pty Ltd). In addition, please refer to the responses by other national Carer Associations and by Carers Australia.

Carers Tasmania wishes to bring to attention to the implications in Tasmania of the imminent implementation of the new ICSS model and the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Dan Tehan MP, has received a briefing from Carers Tasmania via Senator Abetz outlining our concerns in the care sector.

## **Key Issues**

### **Service reliability**

Carers Tasmania is concerned the role and positioning of the Regional Delivery Partners (RDPs) may challenge the continuity and consistency of high quality supports and services for carers during the transition to ICSS. Carers Tasmania recognises that the aims of the ICSS are to *“Improve carer wellbeing, increase their capacity and support their participation socially and emotionally”*. Carers Tasmania’s vision fits well under this remit, our vision being *“An Australia that values and supports carers”*, and mission *“To improve the health, wellbeing, resilience and financial security of carers. And to ensure that caring is a shared responsibility of family, community and government”*.

Carers Tasmania has witnessed carers face increasing challenges and distress when navigating supports in a time of such significant reform. My Aged Care and NDIS have posed particular challenges, for carers. It is therefore important that any reform occurs in a planned, co-ordinated and well communicated way. With carers already experiencing such difficulty, Carers Tasmania is concerned about the possible consequences on the wellbeing of carers, and consequently their how this impact on caring for Tasmania’s most vulnerable. Strategies to minimise impact could include ensuring carers are informed of upcoming changes with adequate notice, that they are fully aware of what will be available to them under the ICSS, and over the time of transition, that there is “no wrong door”, with administrative and organisational confusion to be absorbed by systems, rather than the carer.

It must be acknowledged that the workforce currently supporting carers will be influenced by this change. It is anticipated that some experienced employees dedicated to supporting carers may move over to working within RDPs, reducing the capacity of those organisations currently supporting carers, during an already challenging time of change.

### **Technology and carers**

Carers Tasmania has not seen any reduction in uptake of services with the implementation of the Carer Gateway, and would be interested to know the degree of engagement there has been from carers in Tasmania to the website and contact centre. Older Tasmanians are more likely to rely on information from friends and family, their GP, the television and

newspaper, than websites, and this is of concern with an increased focus on online supports. There are however, specific groups of carers who have expressed an interest in having options for support online (i.e young carers, or groups where confidentiality is of concern).

However, Carers Tasmania continues to value the provision of face to face services to carers including counselling, and that where phone or online counselling may increase access, it would be most effective where there is option for the development of local relationships, with the offer to move from face to face counselling to online or phone counselling with a local provider.

Carers Tasmania also notes the outcomes listed under the objective of improving wellbeing, increasing capacity and supporting social and economic participation, including support. However all that is listed under support is that carers are able to access crisis services. Given the nature of caring and all that it entails, it is likely that the need for supports will continue and that this is over and above being informed, skilled and being able to cope with stress. Carers often develop these skills as they care, and with support. However, the majority of caring circumstances often pose continual challenges that are ongoing, rather than all crisis related.

With the move to online supports, Carers Tasmania anticipates emotional support will be provided informally, without carers necessarily choosing to engage with a service offered at a less personal, national level. This may result in emotional support being provided by staff whom, while very well-intentioned and skilled in their roles, are not professionally equipped to provide counselling. Carers Tasmania also recognises the skill base of the role of carer coaches.

Carers Tasmania is very interested in the provision of Carer Directed Support as this would be an opportunity for carers to determine the supports they need. However, the degree of funding available for this approach and how this could occur is not outlined in this paper.

### **Funding arrangements and timing**

It is understood the Department of Social Services (DSS) will offer up for tender 1 Regional Delivery Partner (RDP) for Tasmania at some point this year and further detail regarding time frames for this process and the funding scope for the RDP would be beneficial. A smaller number of larger contractors is theoretically economically more cost effective as discussed in the paper, but at what cost to the carers' quality of services?

What is of most concern is that contractors must have a fulsome understanding and culture of carer awareness at the heart of what they do. Carers Tasmania and other Associations across the country often hear "this is the first time I have ever felt understood", and "finally someone is really listening to me". This may be because the Carer Associations offer an organisation and culture which is completely dedicated to supporting and representing their needs. Carers Tasmania as the peak body for carers in Tasmania, would offer this complete focus on carers as a RDP.

### **Planned respite**

We recognise that the new RDPs should afford capacity building in service delivery for carers to continue to enable ageing in place for their loved ones. However, details concerning planned respite appear to have fallen off the RDP map, with only emergency respite mentioned (refer Fig. 1 ICSS Overview in RFT70010107 Attachment A – V2).. Unless we make an assumption that “brokerage of local service providers” includes planned respite services. Perhaps there’s an assumption that the health sector will fund this highly effective service for carers who benefit enormously taking a break from their “48 hour days” (quote from a primary carer).

Currently the Care Relationships and Carer Support Sub-Program within the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) funds the provision of supports including centre-based, cottage and flexible respite. Access to these services is currently via Regional Assessment Services on behalf of My Aged Care. With the potential integration of the CHSP and Home Care Packages programme from 1 July 2020, this regional delivery model discussion paper does not make clear whether ‘supports’ under the ICSS will replace the types of supports currently provided by My Aged Care via CHSP providers under the Care Relationships and Carer Support Sub-Program.

### **Existing clients/carers**

A question arises around the transition of existing carers to the new ICSS model. The discussion paper is unclear as to the systems and processes which will be put in place to transfer carers’ data. A clear communications plan will be required to facilitate ease of transition for carers. Carers connected to Carers Tasmania feel they are part of a community and have built ongoing relationships in support groups and/or courses. Carers Tasmania’s existing strong relationships with other service providers in Tasmania also ensures a highly effective network of reliable supports for carers. Therefore, they maybe view the RDP model as isolating them from local contacts and networks. Warm transfer of care and support would assist the stressful time for the carer.

### **Age cohorts**

Caring does not discriminate, and occurs across the lifespan - from young people caring for their parents, grandparents or siblings, older couples caring for each other, or ageing parents caring for their adult offspring. These groups can have specific needs and have traditionally been catered for, to some degree, by specialty services developed to support them. The discussion paper does not address the needs of specific client groups. This may be an oversight or it may be that RDPs are expected to cover care services for all generations in a “one size fits all” approach, which could see some carers falling under the radar of supports with detriment to their wellbeing and vulnerability for those they care for.

While there is mention of the need to intervene early in the life course of a carer, there are also transition points for carers and those they care for, and while a focus on those carers who are most “at risk”, what at risk means is not explored. At risk of no longer being able to attend school or work, at risk to their own wellbeing, or at risk of being unable to continue to care?

## Capacity

### Carers Tasmania

Carers Tasmania is a non-profit, community based, incorporated association and registered charity dedicated to improving the quality of life of the estimated 84,900 family carers living in Tasmania (p.9 draft Regional Delivery Model) who care for someone with a mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, physical disability or who are frail and aged. Operating since 1993, Carers Tasmania celebrates 25 years of high quality services and supports to the Tasmanian community being completely dedicated to carers' needs throughout the state, optimised by its networks of service providers throughout Tasmania.

### Capability and Suitability

Carers Tasmania has a twenty-five year history of developing relationships with carers in their communities across the state. As a small state Tasmania has the highest proportion of carers per capita and the oldest population than any other state in Australia. The organisation has carers at the centre of everything it does, and Carers Tasmania has the track record, expertise program innovation, carer engagement, and evidence of positive outcomes for carers, to be the Regional Development Partner of choice. It is clear that the ICSS model can pull what has been a fractured system of supports to carers into one which will minimise confusion and increase the efficiency of supports to carers.

Carers Tasmania can expedite better outcomes for carers with existing relationships with organisations such as Care Assess, who provide a state-wide Regional Assessment Service. Their assessors have training and experience in the provision of needs assessment, including the current role of assessing care recipients together with their carers for the provision of respite services.

Carers Tasmania understands the current climate is one of competition and, to a degree, of unpredictability, and organisations must astutely prepare for the best outcomes for those they support. To prepare for this process, Carers Tasmania has sought and continues to seek advice from many organisations, to collaborate for the benefit of carers on a daily basis, and will consider the possibility of a consortium approach.

If, from the DSS perspective, the ideal RDP for Tasmania is a national organisation our pre-tender efforts may be wasted. Carers Tasmania recognises preparing for the RDP tender provides an opportunity for continuous improvement and service development, and is fully aware of the breadth of work a RDP involves and delivers. Clarity regarding funding arrangements dedicated to each RDP would enable a more strategic focus for organisations to create formal partnerships to plan for the tendering process, while continuing with business as usual.