

## **Response by the Seniors Collaborative Action Project (auspiced by The Barossa Council, SA) to "Designing the New Integrated Carer Support Service"**

### **Awareness**

In the SCAP region, word of mouth has proven to be the best form of increasing awareness of the carer supports available in the community, demonstrating that a shop front community development type model is the most effective way of supporting carers.

This model of service delivery is also ideal for raising community awareness of the existence and 'legitimacy' of the role of carers within a community, and for garnering additional financial and in-kind support such as donations, sponsorship and volunteering, thus adding value to the Commonwealth's financial investment, and building social capacity.

It is acknowledged that many carers, especially those aged over 50, often have chronic health conditions, disabilities or mental health issues of their own and that effective management and treatment of these conditions will result in better outcomes for both carers and care recipients. Health professionals play an important role here in developing a greater awareness and understanding of the carer burden, and in providing appropriate treatment of conditions complemented by referrals to carer support services available in the local area. Once again a community development model of service delivery is likely to produce better outcomes as it is based on developing collaborative relationships between service providers and health professionals. The Primary Health Networks should play a significant role in raising awareness amongst health professionals about the benefits of working closely with carer support organisations within their regions.

### **Information Provision & Education**

Information should be readily available via phone, web and by 'walking through the door', however there is evidence that information alone does not necessarily lead to improved care outcomes. This further demonstrates the need for a holistic approach to carer support best delivered through a community development model that is responsive to local community needs. Information is best delivered within the context of an education program or peer support group where carers have the opportunity to practice and report on their experiences of applying the knowledge gained through the information acquired.

### **Needs Identification and Planning**

It may take quite a long time for a Carer Support Plan to be developed as carers often 'minimise' their needs or are perhaps unaware of the supports they need that would increase their capacity to be an effective carer. Also their support needs change as their caring role evolves over time. Each carer should have the opportunity to develop an

individual plan that takes into consideration their unique circumstances. This requires a sensitive approach based on building a relationship of trust with a carer support organisation which again is best located within the local community and is provided on a face-to-face basis. There is no “one size fits all” and carers are the experts when it comes to identifying their needs, albeit with some facilitation by appropriately qualified staff.

### **Intake and assessment**

A community development model of carer support service delivery requires an appropriately designed intake and assessment process. It is acknowledged that any publicly-funded service requires a measure of due diligence to ensure eligibility, however carers should not be subjected to a ‘diagnose and treat’ process that is better suited to assess disability or illness, but rather to a process that will result in services and supports designed to provide early intervention and prevention of deterioration of carer capacity.

There is a concern that My Aged Care and the NDIS has made accessing carer support even more difficult as these programs focus on the needs of the care recipient and not the carer. There is currently no assessment of carer support need in either of these programs, and respite appears to be the only service on offer, however respite it is only one component of effective carer support. The new Carer Support Service needs to be seamlessly integrated with these programs to ensure that carers’ needs are addressed as required to reduce the risk of carers being unable to continue their caring roles.

### **Conclusion**

Whilst the current national approach to the delivery of carer support is perceived to be fragmented and difficult to navigate, service providers in the SCAP region believe that the community development model of service delivery utilised in South Australia has made it easier for carers to access the support they need, compared with other states. Therefore the new integrated service should utilise the benefits afforded by the SA model as it has ably demonstrated that it has a preventative focus and assists carers to sustain their caring role and increase their well-being.

As carers need different types and levels of support at different times during their caring role, carer support needs to be flexible and responsive and not ‘packaged’. A community development model better enables service providers to be responsive to the caring needs of the community, and carers are actively involved in designing the supports they need.

A community development model is also cost effective as much of the support comes from the community itself in the form of mentors, sponsors and peer supporters. . The organisation delivering the services is valued by the community resulting in increased awareness and increased likelihood of carers receiving timely support.