

MEDIA RELEASE



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Peer support groups key ingredient to build resilience for carers

A focus on community resilience closes the week of public hearings for the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

With over 250 Carer Support Group members and another 140 peer support groups registered, Carers Victoria, CEO Scott Walker says building community resilience is a key ingredient for supporting Victoria's 736,000 unpaid carers and their families to continue to care.

"Carers tell us the day-in day-out demands of caring and the social isolation they experience as a result can lead to developing their own mental health issues.

"Carers automatically put themselves last and sacrifice their own health and wellbeing to fulfill their caring role. Fifty-six per cent of carers, one in two, is estimated to experience at least moderate depression and 20 per cent experience severe depression, as well as high levels of anxiety, psychological distress and lower perceptions of self-efficacy and personal well-being," Mr Walker said.

Carers need support for their own mental health. Research shows Carer Support Groups reduce social isolation by connecting carers with other people who are going through similar situations to themselves.

Carers Victoria supports carers to connect with other carers by assisting them to access peer support networks in their local region and running workshops on how to put peer support groups together.

According to Mr Walker, the benefits are numerous. "Carers feel more connected to other carers, have increased confidence in their caring roles, increased knowledge of other services, increased understanding of their own care needs and importantly, a feeling of greater understanding and acceptance within the group.

"Through story-sharing and networking, carers build their resilience at both individual and community levels," Mr Walker said.

Editors/producers please note carers available for interview

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