

Carers

news

2019 Edition 2

Generation Z

Young carer stories

Breathe again

Avoid carer burn-out

Carer Gateway

Rollout commences

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Message from Scott

Welcome to the latest edition of *Carers News*.

Change is part and parcel of life and for many of us this can provide both a sense of comfort and unease.

You may recall the moment you first became a carer and what a life changing moment it was. Carers Victoria goes to great efforts to ensure you feel supported throughout your caring journey but you may not realise we're also here to help when your caring role ends. It's a phase you may not have yet considered but I encourage you to read 'Life Beyond Caring' on page 10.

Speaking of change, we've previously indicated there's a Commonwealth reform of services for unpaid carers happening in 2019. Under the new arrangements, funding for existing services will change to the national Carer Gateway. Each State or Territory may have one or more Regional Delivery Partners under this new Integrated Carer Support Service model. The first phase of the rollout has commenced with the introduction of new online support services through the Carer Gateway. In the second phase, new direct carer services delivered at the regional level will begin from 30 September 2019 and be accessible by calling 1800 422 737. You can find out more on page eight.

In this edition we are delighted to introduce Anthony Carbines MP, the new Parliamentary Secretary for Carers.



With so much change in the air this edition is themed 'Breathe' to highlight the value in taking a moment to pause and reflect. I've had the pleasure of meeting many carers at Carers Victoria events and understand how self-sacrificing carers can be. We all know the importance of self-care but the demands of caring often places it at the very bottom of our to-do list. Yet the dangers of 'carer burn-out' and sleep deprivation are real.

I hope you enjoy this edition and take the time to implement some of the lifestyle changes suggested in our '10 ways to improve your sleep' article on page 16. Even small steps can make a profound impact on your quality of life as a carer.

Happy reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Walker', written in a cursive style.

Scott Walker
Chief Executive Officer, Carers Victoria

Meet Anthony Carbines

— *Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers*



Above // Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers Anthony Carbines.

Q. Have you ever had to care for someone, or be cared for yourself?

Whilst I haven't undertaken the role of primary carer myself, I've had close friends and family do so.

I've seen first-hand the sacrifices carers make, and the personal reward that comes from seeing a child finally

takes their first steps after years of physiotherapy appointments or when months of advocacy results in a bathroom upgrade that makes life so much easier.

Caring for someone is a reality of life for hundreds of thousands of Victorians. It's something that will likely affect most of us at some time

in our lives. Carers come from all walks and stages of life. They can be older or very young. Carers support people with different needs, including people with mental illness, chronic health issues, people with disability or older people.

Q. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers, what are you most looking forward to in this role?

I am pleased to be working with Minister Donnellan, we've known each other over 20 years, to represent the needs of carers by taking on this new portfolio. Carers contribute so much to our community and it's only fair that they get the services and support they need.

I'm looking forward to delivering on Victoria's Carer Strategy 2018 – 2022. We have some great initiatives already underway – we're expanding respite and providing new transport concessions and other discounts as well as grants to support local carer activities and state-wide initiatives. But there's still more to do.

I'm also keen to listen to carers and learn more about what life is like and what we can do better. Our first annual Victorian Carer Forum in July was a great opportunity for me to do this and to hear from organisations like Carers Victoria about the great work they're doing.

Q. What do you think are the biggest challenges for carers?

For many Victorians caring for a loved one is a 24/7 job. Understandably, it can be hard for carers to take a break from their responsibilities and to look after their own health and wellbeing.

I think an issue that plays on a lot of carers' minds is "What will happen if something happens to me?"

And we know carers also often feel "unheard" or that their needs don't matter.

Carers can also experience financial stress. We know that one in five carers give up work to care for someone and young carers drop out of school at a higher rate than their peers.

Navigating all the different systems is really hard too, for example when Centrelink insists that everything be done online. I know that can be difficult for many carers.

We also know there are some people who may not identify as carers which can make it even harder for them to look after themselves and get the support they need.

Q. How will the Victorian Government address these challenges?

We're working hard to deliver on the priorities of the Victorian Carer Strategy. We've introduced a package of initiatives backed by nearly \$50 million in funding. We're boosting the Support for Carers program by providing an extra 5,000 Victorian carers with an additional 100,000 hours of respite each year.

We're also providing \$4 million in grants to make sure more carers get the emotional support they need. These grants will support local activities that strengthen the health and wellbeing of carers and help them connect with other carers and improve the conditions and opportunities for carers statewide.

Carer Card holders can now get half price public transport and free travel on weekends and during Carers Week in October. We've also extended the Seniors Card program benefits to Carer Card holders so that they can access a greater range of business discounts.

Q. What else are you focusing on to help ensure Victorian carers continue to get the support they need in their caring role?

Minister Donnellan has appointed me chair of a new Carers Advisory Group that will provide advice to government on the needs and rights of carers and the implementation of our Victorian Carer Strategy.

We're also working with our counterparts in other departments such as transport and education on our whole-of-government approach to support carers.

Q. You have a young family and hold a busy role as the Member for Ivanhoe and as Parliamentary Secretary for Health, as well as Carers and Volunteers. What are your top self-care tips?

It's important to be able to have people you can talk to about your day, have a gripe or a laugh, share your thoughts and challenges. We've funded Carers Victoria to upgrade their website to include all support groups, including online ones, to make it easier for people to find each other.

For me, regularly going for a run or a ride really helps me keep on top of things, but I know not everyone has the time or ability to fit in some exercise. However, if you can manage it, even a 10-minute walk outside can do wonders.

Q. What personal message would you like to send to Victoria's 736,000 carers?

You make an enormous contribution to our community. Thank you for all the hard work and dedication you put in to supporting your loved ones, family members or friends.

We want to make your job easier and ensure you get the care and support you deserve. I'm here to help and look forward to working together to advocate for your needs and interests in the future.

NATIONAL CARERS WEEK 2019 13-19 OCTOBER

It's nearly that time of year again! National Carers Week will be held from 13 – 19 October 2019 and Carers Australia has secured two high-profile sports stars set to be revealed as official Ambassadors in the coming weeks! Both are prominent in their respective fields and both perform an unpaid caring role for a family member.

This personal experience of unpaid caring is crucial to be able to effectively communicate just why it is that carers need to be celebrated and supported across Australia. As in previous years, we will be filming video resources for use on TV and online, recording radio information

messages and conducting a range of interviews across various media outlets in the build-up to and throughout National Carers Week.

There are many ways you can get involved with National Carers Week 2019. This year's theme is 'Tell Us Why You Care' so why not start by sharing your caring story online? Remember to use the official hashtags #Carers2019 and #WhyWeCare. You can also discover which organisations and carer support groups are hosting events by visiting carersweek.com.au. Let others know about your celebrations by adding them to the National Carers Week website. Alternatively, call or visit your State Carers Association's website to find out what local events are available to you.

Young Carer Bursary

Applications are now open for the Carers Australia 2020 Young Carer Bursary. The Department of Social Services funded program supports young carers aged 12–25 to engage in education by awarding \$3,000 scholarships for a year.

This year there are more bursaries on offer than ever before, with 1,000 places available to eligible young carers who are currently studying or training or have plans to do so in 2020.

For more details or to apply visit youngcarersnetwork.com.au/young-carer-bursary.

**Applications close on
3 September 2019.**





Above // Young carer Isaiah.

Singing from the same sheet

Within minutes of meeting Isaiah Semertzidis it's obvious the 12 year old has a maturity beyond his years, which could stem from supporting parents George and Laura in caring for his 15 year old autistic brother Christian.

Isaiah ensures his brother looks his best before leaving the house in the mornings and packs away their belongings after school before helping Dad organise Christian's shower. Christian can't hold a conversation but he can sing and, like Isaiah, plays the piano. When Isaiah cares for Christian the two will spend hours at the piano, play games or sports and walk their dog. The brothers also attend mainstream golf lessons where Isaiah will interpret the instructor's guidance into a friendlier format for Christian.

Christian also does Special Olympics and Isaiah proactively motivates his team with advice and encouragement and volunteers to measure shot put distances. Isaiah's modesty means he doesn't think of his actions as anything special ("it's my everyday life" he says), but Laura is proud of her son's wise and compassionate nature.

"Because Isaiah's mature he gets more out of adults and tends to mix with the older students at golf and Taekwondo. But he also fusses over little kids and nurtures them," she says. When a child at his former Taekwondo class wanted to quit out of fear of sparring (a free-form training activity in martial arts), Isaiah reassured him "everything's going to

be ok and I will be by your side if you need me" and he then tried it. Isaiah now practises Taekwondo at a more elite level and seems unfazed about being younger than his competitors.

It's this fearless approach which gives Laura confidence Isaiah is more than capable of caring for Christian when she needs a break. The brothers often look around the shops while Laura runs errands and then meet at an agreed time and place. Isaiah also took Christian to see Aladdin the musical and the brothers stayed overnight with a carer at Melbourne's Crown Promenade hotel where they enjoyed the swimming pool. Despite his invaluable support, Isaiah doesn't identify as a young carer.

"I don't go to school and say, 'I'm a carer.' You say, 'I have a brother'. If someone asks me I will tell them. I'm not ashamed," he says. However when Isaiah was boarding a bus for school camp, he noticed his classmate also had an autistic brother. The two struck up a conversation about having a sibling with disability.

Isaiah's offered the following advice to his classmate who didn't seem to be coping with being a young carer: "Just do your best and don't get angry at them because it's not their fault." Isaiah offered reassurance

life will be ok and he should speak openly with his parents.

With approximately 272,000 young carers in Australia, chances are there are more hidden young carers who would welcome Isaiah's advice.

When he wants to unwind Isaiah seeks solace in the piano. He effortlessly plays a Beethoven classic and his talent is awe-inspiring. The soon-to-be teenager is unsure which career path he wants to pursue as he's told he would make an excellent doctor, athlete or musician. Without a crystal ball to foresee into the future, the only guarantee is this remarkable young carer will excel at whatever he puts his heart and mind to.



Above // L-R: Isaiah and Laura with the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers Luke Donnellan at a media opportunity.



Above // Jessica & Fiona.

A *teen* with *star quality*

Jessica, 14, cares for her mum Fiona who lives with intracranial hypotension and an undiagnosed left-sided weakness. They share the ins and outs of their caring relationship.

Jessica's story

"We have support workers from Tuesday to Thursday who help with showering, chores and meals. In the mornings I'll greet them then turn on Mum's light and make us a cuppa. Mornings are the hardest as Mum can't talk or move much. I still understand her; it's like we have a secret language.

The days we don't have support I help more. I notice when Mum isn't well. Thankfully, I've had first aid training and know what to do.

I find people underestimate me. I was told I was too young to do first aid, but I needed it and it's been helpful. I've been talked down to, with hospital staff treating me like a baby and wanting to put me in another room when, really, I know more than anyone about what is happening to Mum. I once gave them a handwritten list of Mum's medications – they were surprised!

I've been home schooled since last August. I get to do the coolest things – like acting workshops and studying astronomy – and it means I can help. I went to space camp in Canberra and felt nervous being away from Mum, but we spoke daily. I might be going back to school though, as it's hard to focus on my formal learning. If I do this Mum may need more help.

Many people don't understand what it really means to be a young carer: it's more than everyday chores. And I don't go out or to the mall like other teenagers. I've only started being independent and don't enjoy being away from home. I often get physically sick and have realised I'm not homesick when this happens, I'm Mum sick!

The best thing about being a young carer is the support we get but there isn't much available due to service cuts. There should be more funding for young carers. Not so much for fun activities but for physical and mental health first aid and cooking. I'd love to see a psychologist who was a young carer. They'd understand how I feel and could offer advice from their experiences. I'd also like a drop-in session where young carers could spend time together in a comfortable place with counsellors and other supports available.

I'm most proud of being able to help people but lots of things make me happy. I appreciate my friends as I don't see them much. I love reading, acting, singing, dancing and relaxing at home. I was recently in some audio theatre as a voice actor and will soon be in a film."

Fiona's story

"I wake up differently every day with varying levels of disability. Intracranial hypotension can be hard to understand

and many people don't know what I've had to do to be interacting with them on any given day. Or what it means to have Jessica beside me, as my daughter and carer. I hope to make a documentary about my experience.

The hardest things for me currently are navigating access to the National Disability Scheme, this new weakness on the left side of my body and my involuntary movements.

I don't think Jessica realises how much she does for me, particularly the emotional support she provides. It's often a look or squeeze of my hand. She knows when I'm anxious or uncomfortable.

There should be something between the carers allowance and carers payment for young carers to acknowledge their role and assist them with being independent, like needing taxis when there's no one to provide transport.

While I don't like my illness and the problems it brings, I'm grateful for the flexibility and creativity in my life. I have more time with Jessica than I would have if I was in a nine-to-five job. Some may say we're co-dependent, but this is how life has had to be for us. But now Jessica is getting older, we're redesigning our identity with the support of others so we can be strong, independent women."

Online Carer Gateway Services Go-Live

Over the rest of this year, new Carer Gateway services will roll-out across Australia: online supports accessible from anywhere and in-person services to be delivered through 16 Carer Gateway service providers.

The first of these digital supports are now available.

■ **Online Community Forums**

connect you with other carers from around Australia, with whom you can share stories, ask questions, exchange knowledge and experience, and engage at a time which suits you.

■ **Self-guided coaching** modules you can work through at your own pace. The modules will help carers gain skills and knowledge about the caring situation. They are not specific to a condition, such as dementia or a type of illness, but apply to all carers.

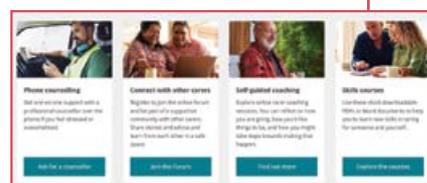
■ **Phone-based counselling** can provide you with short-term support when you need it. You can speak with someone completely

outside your situation from the comfort of your home from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday.

■ **Practical skills courses** to help improve your skills in your caring role.

It's recognised the online supports won't be for everyone. However, they offer you the opportunity to access supports on your own terms. For example, a carer of someone with an episodic condition may value being able to share their frustrations online in the middle of the night. Other carers will value having a coffee in their garden and being able to speak confidentially with a counsellor.

Online supports are available through **carergateway.gov.au**, with counselling also available by calling **1800 422 737**.



Phone counselling	Online Community Forums	Online coaching	Short courses
<p>Call 1800 422 737 and select option 1 or go to carergateway.gov.au and choose "Ask for a counsellor".</p> <p>On the next page select Request a Callback (purple box on right hand side). You will then be called to arrange a counselling session.</p>	<p>Go to carergateway.gov.au and choose "Join the Forum."</p> <p>On the next page, choose "Start a discussion" in the purple box. Next, choose the option to "Register here" and you will be asked to give your name and email address.</p>	<p>Go to carergateway.gov.au and choose "Find out more."</p> <p>At the bottom of the next page, choose the option to register. You will be asked to create a username (doesn't have to be your own name), create a password and give your email address.</p> <p>You will also be asked to give some anonymous information about yourself to help future service improvement.</p>	<p>Go to carergateway.gov.au and choose "Explore the courses."</p> <p>You will be taken to a page with course options. You won't need to register.</p>

1800 422 737 | carergateway.gov.au



Avoid *the* pitfalls of Carer 'Burn-out'

In May 2019 the World Health Organisation held a forum where leading experts officially recognised 'burn-out' as a legitimate medical diagnosis.

This is welcome news for people struggling with 'burn-out' – a condition stemming from excessive and prolonged stress – and is a step toward greater recognition from medical professionals of its significant impact.

While the official diagnosis is reserved for the workplace context only, the reality of caring means it's sometimes equivalent to a full-time job. Most carers agree the caring role can be incredibly rewarding but also stressful and overwhelming at times. If left unchecked, these stressors can wreak havoc on your physical and emotional health and relationships, ultimately leading to carer 'burn-out'.

But how is 'burn-out' different to regular stress and what are the warning signs?

Carer 'burn-out' is described as a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion often accompanied by feelings of fatigue, stress, anxiety and depression. Another sign is a shift in attitude from positive and caring to feeling negative, hopeless, alone and unappreciated. Other less obvious clues include change in appetite or sleeping patterns, regular colds and infections, social withdrawal and increased irritability.

'Burn-out' doesn't happen overnight. It gradually appears due to various factors. Feeling powerless and under supported are key contributors, as

is over-extending yourself to the point where your own needs are neglected. Eventually this can lead to a lack of motivation and avoidance of responsibilities, which are unhealthy for both yourself and the person you support. By learning to recognise the signs and symptoms, you can take simple steps to control the situation and reclaim your power:

- Nourish your body with fresh foods, lean proteins and healthy fats to counteract the effects of stress. A hearty soup is an instant immunity and energy booster.
- Commit to 20 minutes each day of self-care. Read a book, meditate or listen to your favourite song. Your body and mind will thank you.
- Take a daily walk to combat fatigue. Exercise is also a powerful stress reliever and releases feel-good chemicals in your brain.
- Aim for 7–8 hours of sleep to adequately manage stress. See pages 15 and 16 for further advice.
- Seek professional support to re-frame any negative thoughts and establish boundaries so you can say 'no' without feeling guilty.
- Relinquish some control by asking for, and accepting, support from family and friends. If this feels uneasy, start small by getting help with meals or groceries.

- Sharing feelings can be healing and reduce stress levels. Join a carer support group or invite a close friend over for a chat.
- Laughter is a proven form of stress management. Watch a comedy or read jokes online; it provides short-term relief and relaxation.
- Investigate respite options to give yourself a break. Contact your local Carer Association for advice.

These strategies may seem like impossible luxuries or too insignificant to make a difference, but they can profoundly influence our mindset and this is the one thing we can control. Remember, before we can effectively care for another we must care for ourselves. Self-care is essential and will go a long way toward managing high stress levels which leave you vulnerable to carer 'burn-out'.

If you are still experiencing symptoms of 'burn-out' please consult your doctor or health professional.

Watch: TED Talk 'Self-care for Caregivers' by Linda Ercoli and try her **S-S-U-P-R** technique to avoid carer burn-out.

[youtube.com/
watch?v=H3RQ9-hOuIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3RQ9-hOuIE)

Life after caring

There will come a time when your caring role will change - perhaps the person you care for will have recovered from their condition, become more independent, require residential care or have died.

As a busy carer, you may not have thought this far ahead or the prospect may feel too daunting; however with awareness comes the ability to manage this life changing event in the best way possible. Caring for someone can be a big part of your life and few carers are prepared for the mix of emotions which surface when their caring role changes. Feeling anger, sadness, frustration, helplessness, relief and subsequent guilt, shock and confusion are all common reactions according to Mary O'Mara, counsellor at Carers Victoria:

"Carers may also experience a loss of identity or purpose. It can be a lightbulb moment where they suddenly realise being a carer met a need to be needed." Mary advises it's important to acknowledge the caring journey and give yourself time to re-adjust to a new reality.

Gently re-invent yourself

While you may need to sort out some practical matters quickly as a result of your changed caring status, such as

carer payments, there is no schedule for re-inventing yourself. After dedicating much time and energy to caring, the stark contrast of having whole days to fill can be confronting. After forgetting your own needs for so long, give yourself permission to rest. Take the time to pause and breathe. Some carers find once they are no longer caring, the physical and emotional exhaustion catches up and they become unwell.

"At a time when you feel physically and emotionally exhausted it can be challenging to re-invent yourself. Nurture your wellbeing as you embark on this new chapter. I always recommend carers get a health check if nothing else,"

– Mary O'Mara, Counsellor

When you feel the time is right, consider what you'd like to do. You may consider returning to the life you had before caring or use this opportunity to

make a fresh start.

Take baby steps

Get the support you need as you transition to a new routine and lifestyle. This can be an isolating time as the bond you once shared with the person you support and social relationships with medical professionals and other carers has changed. "A lot of carer support groups don't meet the needs of a former carer and they find the support drops away," says Mary.

Being a carer may also have left little time for social interaction with family and friends. Start small by calling a loved one or meeting a friend for a coffee to reconnect. However, be mindful that family and friends may also find it difficult to fully comprehend your situation. "It's a different kind of grief compared to someone who has never been a carer".

Mary suggests contacting your local Carer Association for support. "Most offer individual and dedicated group counselling programs for bereavement.

Often the participants will form their own social groups based on their shared sense of loss.”

Alternatively, call the Carer Gateway on **1800 422 737** for support or journal your feelings to get them off your chest. And as you begin to get out of the house and do things you enjoy such as reading, walking or gardening, try not to feel guilty about rediscovering joy in a life beyond caring responsibilities. Relief is a normal reaction if you had a great deal of responsibility in your caring role.

The bigger picture

Once you've processed the change and settled into this new territory, you may consider taking up work, study or volunteering. These may provide added purpose and structure to your life, are avenues for social interaction and can help build new skills and confidence.

Getting involved in the community through volunteer work can be rewarding and may also lead to paid work if this is your end goal. Carers have many skills which are attractive to employers – initiative, flexibility, problem-solving, negotiation and organisational just to name a few. Take a look at job seeking sites such as **ethicaljobs.com.au** to see which roles align with your caring skills. Also visit your local library and community hub websites to explore courses or training programs in your area which may spark your general interest or refresh a knowledge gap. If finances are difficult, there may be free courses or scholarships available.

There are many different paths to choose from and no two carer journeys will be the same. It's a personal experience with no right or wrong approach. The only rule is to be kind to yourself as you undergo this major life transformation.

*Name changed at request of carer to protect her privacy.

“My advice to other carers is think about what life might look like once your caring role ends. It can be difficult to think about the future because as a carer you're always in the present and trying to cope with what is going on in the moment. However, I think it's important to understand what a new 'normal' may look like in the future and to plan for that.”

– Cherie*, former carer





Be Scam Aware

Australians have already lost more than \$58 million to scams in 2019*.

A third of these scams were via email, internet or social networking sites where scammers can thrive in the anonymity of the digital world. While the highest number of victims were aged 65 and older, anyone can fall prey to an online scam.

Most of us associate scams with stealing money but giving away personal information is equally harmful. Scammers commit identity theft to conduct fraudulent activities such as opening unauthorised accounts. The emotional harm can be devastating, as the victim's vulnerabilities are exploited to extract money and they're left feeling violated afterwards. The good news is, by being scam aware and following a few simple rules you can protect yourself as you go about your caring role.

Australian Government correspondence

Scammers pretend to be from the Australian Taxation Office, Centrelink, MyGov or Medicare and will email you to advise there's unpaid debt which must be paid immediately to avoid penalties. The tone may be threatening and include an attachment or link to a fake website where you'll be asked to download proof of the bill. These bogus files infect your computer with malicious software which can steal, encrypt or delete your data or spy on your activity. Another tactic is to notify you of a rebate you're entitled to due to a system error but there's a small administration fee to receive the funds. Scammers may also pretend to be from a trusted non-government organisation.

- Stop and think whether the allegation could be true.

- Government agencies or reputable companies will never ask for payment via unusual methods such as gift card, money order, wire transfer or bitcoins.
- Australian government email addresses end with **.gov.au** and their emails won't include live links.
- If an email looks unsolicited, don't click on any links and delete it immediately.

Donations

Scammers impersonate not-for-profit organisations and take advantage of your generosity to obtain money. These scams divert much needed funds away from legitimate causes.

- Credit card payments usually offer some protection.
- Look for secure payment options where 'https' appears in the web address and the site has a closed padlock symbol.
- If in doubt, call the organisation directly by finding their contact details via Google — don't use what's listed in the email.

Medication

Fake online pharmacies may offer medication at discounted prices, sometimes even without a prescription. These counterfeit drugs may have no active ingredients and can be harmful. Always consult with your GP before purchasing medication online.

Social media platforms

Scammers can use your information and photos to steal your identity or

choose you as a target. Be careful about what information you share online about your life and who you befriend or accept messages from.

If you care for a teenager or child, consider implementing boundaries to protect them from scammers and predators who lurk on social media, entertainment and video gaming sites. This may include which sites are accessed, no contact with strangers or clicking on advertisements or downloads which may link to illicit sites or malware.

Other tips:

- Check your privacy settings.
- Change passwords regularly and ask your teenager or child to share theirs with you.
- Avoid public computers or free WIFI to access online banking or personal information.

Remember, if it sounds too good to be true or your instincts tell you something is wrong, it probably is. Report any scams to **acc.gov.au**, the organisation or social media platform in question and your bank. For identity theft contact IDCARE — a free, government funded service — on **1300 432 273**.

*Data from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

Resources

scamwatch.gov.au

staysmartonline.gov.au

esafety.gov.au/esafety-information

Aroma therapy

Aromatherapy is the use of aromatic plant oils to promote physical and emotional wellbeing.

While the practice dates back to ancient cultures from approximately 6,000 years ago, the term 'aromatherapy' was first coined in 1937 by French perfumer and chemist Rene-Maurice Gattefosse when he discovered the healing potential of lavender after burning his hand. Fast forward to the present day and aromatherapy is increasingly gaining scientific and medical recognition for its therapeutic benefits. It's commonly used in hospitals, workplaces and other public spaces to create ambience and promote healing of minor ailments.

The pure essential oils used in aromatherapy are distilled from the scented parts of a plant until they vaporise and then condense as it cools. The different aromas and chemical elements of aromatherapy oils – which may include antiseptic, bacterial, anti-viral and anti-inflammatory properties – can produce various effects on the body and mind.

Depending on your choice of essential oil, aromatherapy can be either stimulating or calming. With nearly 100 different types available it can be difficult to choose one. Here are the most popular oils and their associated benefits:

Lavender – contains stress relieving properties good for treating headaches, insomnia, aches and pains. It's also a healing aid against burns and colds thanks to its decongestant, antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties.

Peppermint – has natural energy-boosting properties to put a pep in your step. It's also a cooling agent which combats irritation, sharpens focus and aids digestion.

Rosemary – is a natural mental stimulant and painkiller good for boosting memory, relieving congestion and alleviating stiff, sore muscles.

Sandalwood – many yoga practitioners use this essential oil for its calming effect. By relieving nervous tension this woody scent promotes good sleep and it's antiseptic and anti-inflammatory qualities are beneficial for treating common skin conditions.

Tea Tree – a powerful immune booster which also fights fungal, bacterial and viral infections. It works to treat skin problems, respiratory conditions, muscular pains and is a natural insecticide.

Aromatherapy works via inhalation and sense of smell or skin absorption. The essential oils can be heated in an oil burner or added to a diffuser to disperse a vapourised scent which is gently inhaled into the body through the respiratory system. You can also add a few drops with your body wash to bath water. Alternatively, mix it with a plain carrier oil (for example, cold-pressed vegetable or olive oil) or body lotion and apply topically. Avoid diluting with mineral oil creams, such as sorbolene or baby oil, as they are unsuitable for aromatherapy.

Essential oils can be purchased online, in health food stores and pharmacies. Always buy from a reputable supplier to ensure your product is 100 per cent pure and free from any additives or synthetic ingredients.



A word of caution

Essential oils are generally safe but they are highly concentrated and must always be used sparingly and diluted. Never ingest the oils in your mouth as they may be poisonous or apply them directly to skin as they can cause burns or allergic reactions. Even when diluting them with a carrier oil or body lotion always do a patch test first. Some citrus oils can cause sensitivity to sunlight.

Certain oils can be dangerous during pregnancy or breastfeeding and for people with asthma, epilepsy, hay fever, high blood pressure or individuals on prescription medication. Always consult with your doctor before starting aromatherapy.



Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety – *the first six months*

Since Royal Commission hearings began in Adelaide in February, there has been a deliberate focus on direct accounts of the experiences of older people and their carers.

Personal accounts provide powerful and compelling insights into the experience of using or seeking aged care services, and what needs to be improved.

Adelaide hearings included:

- the aged care quality, safety and complaints system
- changing population demographics and the implications for the aged care system, and
- the nature and meaning of 'quality' and 'safety'.

The next round of hearings in March in Sydney focused on care for people living with dementia and the challenges of providing quality dementia care.

The Royal Commission then moved to Broome in May to focus on access by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to aged care services and their availability in remote areas.

Hearings in Perth in June inquired into whether aged care services are delivered in a way which values the identity, experience and autonomy of the person accessing care, including end-of-life and palliative care. They also examined broader social attitudes towards older people.

The Darwin and Cairns hearings enquired into the quality of clinical care including wound care, medication and pain management, nutrition and hydration, continence care, mobility and falls risk and care for medical conditions like diabetes. Tensions between providing high quality clinical care while also promoting quality of life were also examined.

At the time of going to press, hearings in Mildura had a welcome focus on carers. In examining the needs of unpaid carers for older Australians, the Commission heard evidence on:

- the extent to which current arrangements meet carer needs
- how services and supports for carers could be improved
- respite care.

While Carers Australia and State and Territory Carer Associations are making submissions to the Royal Commission, they have repeatedly emphasised their wish to receive submissions from individual carers. These can be made public or kept private. See agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/submissions for more details.

The website now includes:

- information translated into 31 different languages
- a plain English description about the Royal Commission
- information about engagement by the Royal Commission
- information about a range of support services
- an easier to use submissions page.

Follow the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety on Facebook to keep up with the latest information about hearings, community forums and how to make a submission.

[facebook.com/
agedcareroyalcommission/](https://facebook.com/agedcareroyalcommission/)

Anyone supporting a relative or friend using aged care services can contact the Carer Advisory Line on **1800 242 636** until 30 November 2019 for information, support and referral to counselling and other support services.



The Hidden Risks of Sleep Deprivation

Feeling tired? Nearly half of all primary carers have troubles with sleep. The Australian Bureau of Statistics says this is the single biggest problem in the wellbeing of carers.

Sleep deprivation can have a similar effect to having a blood alcohol level over .05. Judgement can be impaired and carers describe “just feeling awful”.

Put this all together and there are a lot of people providing a valuable service who feel lousy and can't think straight.

Despite us spending up to a third of our life asleep, surprisingly, not much is known about what sleep is. Why we sleep has many experts baffled. Most people think it is to reset our brain. Every day we take in a huge amount of information and only some of it makes its way to our consciousness. Sleep is like the reset button on a computer. Turning it off and on again clears out a lot of the irrelevant stuff bouncing around your head.

Scientists found even small amounts of sleep deprivation can have dramatic effects. Sleep deprived people have a significant decrease in their heart rate and blood pressure as well as a drop in their overall body temperature. These changes occur because the body's control of internal organs and maintaining its temperature is put out of balance.

Our bodies don't just get used to being tired all the time, the 'cost' of not getting enough sleep accumulates and can have long term effects. Still, many people push through and are unaware of how much better they would feel if they just got enough sleep.

No wonder so many people are feeling bad.

If we aren't taking care of ourselves, we can't take care of others as well as we would like.

It is possible to change sleeping habits and while this may take some effort, it will result in you feeling much better.

The Sleep Health Foundation

Carers Australia has partnered with the Sleep Health Foundation to conduct research into the many issues which stem from sleep deprivation and its impact on family and friend carers.

Turn the page for simple strategies to improve your quality of sleep ➔



10 Ways to *improve your sleep*

Do you practice good sleep hygiene? Your bedtime rituals and habits can help or hinder your ability to get the recommended seven to eight hours of sleep.

1 Create a restful environment

A dark, quiet and cool bedroom signals to your brain it's time to wind down. Invest in heavy curtains, an eye mask and ear plugs. A room temperature of about 18 degrees Celsius is ideal – any hotter or cooler can cause restlessness.

2 Limit screen time

Use the bedroom for sleep and intimacy only. This strengthens your brain's association between your bedroom and sleep. Avoid iPads, mobiles, laptops and television at least one hour before bedtime. They emit blue light which the brain perceives as daylight.

3 Establish a bedtime routine

Doing a calming activity an hour before bedtime trains the brain to know when it's time for bed. Try a warm bath or shower (the rise and fall in temperature promotes drowsiness), light stretches or reading a book by soft light. Avoid anything stressful as it raises the hormone cortisol which boosts alertness. If something's on your mind, jot it down.

4 Ditch the stimulants

Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol at least six hours before bedtime as they accelerate the heart rate and blood pressure. Caffeine culprits include

coffee, green tea, chocolate and cola. Alcohol may initially cause drowsiness but acts as a stimulant when the body begins processing it. Opt for warm milk instead, it naturally induces sleep.

5 Don't count sheep

If after 20 minutes in bed you're struggling to fall asleep, or wake through the night, go to another room and do something relaxing for half an hour. Staring at the clock increases stress and your brain will associate the bedroom with negativity. Remember to dim the lights and avoid screens.

6 Consistent sleep and wake times

Try to wake up and go to bed as close to the same time each day as realistically possible, even on weekends. This reinforces your body's sleep-wake cycle. Choose a bedtime when you normally feel tired to avoid restlessness. If you need an alarm in the mornings, try an earlier bedtime.

7 Keep evening meals light

Heavy, spicy, acidic or fatty foods within two hours of bedtime can trigger or aggravate indigestion, acid reflux and heartburn. If you're hungry, snack on yoghurt, nuts or a banana. Limit sugary foods and refined carbohydrates throughout the day as they can also trigger wakefulness at night.

8 Time your exercise right

As little as 10 minutes of daily cardio can increase the amount of deep, restorative stages of sleep. Avoid strenuous activity at least two hours before bedtime as it can energise and overheat you. It can take several months of regular exercise to experience the results so be patient.

9 Balance fluid intake

Hydration is important. Too little and you'll wake through the night thirsty. Too much and you'll be disrupted by the urge to go to the bathroom. Remember to empty your bladder one last time before bed to avoid being woken up by your bladder.

10 Let there be light

Adequate sunlight exposure helps us stay in tune with natural day-night rhythms connected to our internal body clock. Have your breakfast outside or by a sunny window. The light will help to wake you up and maintain energy levels.

If your sleep doesn't improve after practising good sleep hygiene please see a doctor. There could be underlying factors to be considered by a health professional.



Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

The Royal Commission will provide actions which will change Victoria's mental health systems.

The Royal Commission was initiated by the Andrews Labor Government and received initial submissions until 5 July 2019. Carers Victoria highlighted:

- Carers need support for their own mental health.
- Consumers of mental health services may have care responsibilities. Consumers must be routinely asked about their care responsibilities and how this impacts their mental health.
- Carers and consumers need support to maintain their care relationship. The Victorian Carer Strategy 2018-2022 aims to support carers across five priority areas:
 - better health and wellbeing
 - support in school, study and work
 - access support and services
 - less financial stress
 - recognition, acknowledgment and respect.

The Commission held a public hearing focused on families and carers on 12 July 2019. Commissioners heard that carers are 'ordinary people doing extraordinary things'. Further consultations will be held and a draft report is expected in November 2019. Visit rcvmhs.vic.gov.au or call **1800 001 134** for more details.

Young Carer Tax Donation Appeal

To coincide with the end of financial year – a time when many organisations and individuals give generously to receive a tax deduction – Carers Victoria ran a donation appeal focused on raising funds to support programs and events for young carers.

The tax appeal campaign used Facebook to raise public awareness of what life is like for Victoria's 71,600 young carers aged 25 and under. Personal stories from young carers* featured throughout the campaign to highlight what a remarkable job these individuals do in caring for a family member with a disability, illness or who is frail aged. Donors could choose how much they wished to contribute to Carers Victoria's Young Carer Program or select from pre-nominated amounts outlining how each dollar amount could positively impact a young carer's life.

The campaign successfully raised nearly \$20,000 toward the Young Carer Program and will be used to fund future young carer events and scholarship programs. This year,

Carers Victoria proudly awarded 148 Young Carer Scholarships to secondary school aged carers across the State. The successful recipients were awarded grants of up to \$500 in recognition of their valuable caring role which was used by young carers to pay for school expenses, driving lessons, sporting, music and art activities. They will be formally acknowledged in front of their family and friends at a Young Carer Scholarship award ceremony in September.

Carers Victoria would like to thank all carers who supported our tax appeal campaign this year. Whether it was a direct donation or promoting our campaign by sharing it with family and friends on Facebook – every little bit counts.

*names changed to protect privacy

Take a Break

Sudoku

7	2	3						4
		9	1					
1			9	4				
	3				4	7		
6	1			3			9	4
		7	8				2	
				7	9			5
					1	9		
	5					6	7	1

Sudoku Answers:

9	5	4	3	8	2	6	7	1
3	7	6	4	5	1	9	8	2
2	8	1	6	7	9	4	3	5
4	9	7	8	1	6	5	2	3
6	1	2	7	3	5	8	9	4
8	3	5	2	9	4	7	1	6
1	6	8	9	4	3	2	5	7
5	4	9	1	2	7	3	6	8
7	2	3	5	6	8	1	4	9

Source: www.sudokuoftheday.com



Recipe – Healthy Lamb* & Barley Soup

Prep: 10 mins + overnight cooling

Cook: 70 mins

Serves: 6

Ingredients

- 500 g lamb offcuts (on the bone)*
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1 stalk celery, including the leaves, chopped
- 1 potato, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 tsp dried Italian herbs
- 1/2 cup barley or soup mix
- 1 tsp reduced-salt vegetable stock powder
- pepper, to taste

* Use any cheap cut of meat with the bone in (chicken wings, chicken drumsticks, lamb neck, lamb shank, soup bones).

Instructions

1. Cut any visible pieces of fat off the meat and discard.
2. Place all ingredients in a medium saucepan.
3. Add 1.5 litres of water to completely cover the ingredients. Add more if needed.
4. With a lid on, place the pan on a high heat until boiling.
5. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 1 hour or until the meat is easily pulled from the bone.
6. Take off the heat and allow pot to cool for 20 minutes.
7. Place the covered pot in the fridge to cool overnight. Remove the visible fat from the top with a spoon and discard.
8. Remove the meat from the bones and discard the bones.
9. To serve, warm the soup over medium heat for 10–15 minutes until heated through.

Recipe sourced from LiveLighter®. State of Western Australia 2012, reproduced with permission. For more recipes visit livelighter.com.au

Carers Victoria

Dementia and Family Carers Conference



Above // Carers Victoria staff at the conference.



Above // L-R: Carer Anne Tudor with Victoria's Public Advocate Colleen Pearce and Carers Victoria CEO Scott Walker.

More than 90 carers, leading experts in the field of dementia and Carers Victoria representatives gathered at the William Angliss Conference Centre on 25 June 2019 for the Dementia and Family Carers conference. On the day, carers were treated to a variety of presentations from guest speakers representing Dementia Australia, Thrive Rehab, Japara and Northern Health. They heard about the latest research and innovative approaches in dementia care.

The event also provided a great opportunity for carers to mingle and connect over their shared experiences in caring for a person with dementia.

By all accounts it proved to be a successful and worthwhile event. Carers Victoria thanks our industry partners for their support in delivering the conference and to all carers who travelled from across Victoria to participate.

If you missed the event, a copy of the presentation is available on the Carers Victoria website under the Resources section.

"I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone involved in organising this event. It was so well-presented, informative and covered aspects surrounding the topic that I had not even thought about. The biggest thing for me was how moving it was to see so many different walks of life getting together to support each other and collaborate ideas. Absolutely amazing!"

– Selina Stephens, carer



Above // Carers Victoria's Carer Support Worker Gabrielle Urban chatting with a carer.



Above // Carers could mingle with one another throughout the day.



Above // The conference panel ready for a round of discussion with the plenary.

"It was a wonderful day. It was so informative. I learnt many new things. I met a couple of new people. The reception staff were lovely. The MC was great and the way he intertwined the welcome to Country with Carers roles and caring for the country was wonderful. A really worthwhile experience, thank you."

– Jo Gibbons, carer



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www.carersvictoria.org.au



Carers Victoria acknowledges the traditional owners of this land and pays respect to elders both past and present

