

More Services and Better Navigation

Key points

- › The number of Victorian carers has increased by over 20% in the past five years alone and by 2025 there will be more than 1 million unpaid carers across Victoria.
- › In addition, the pandemic had significant and adverse impacts for many carers who now need extra support to adjust to COVID-normal.
- › Recent government funding changes have reduced funded support for carers in metropolitan Melbourne. This funding must be restored and expanded to match the growth in carer numbers so they can receive basic support no matter where they live in Victoria.
- › Funding which supports carers must be made recurrent.
- › Carers tell us that it is complex and confusing trying to find the help they need – a state-based advisory service is essential to fill current system gaps.

The challenges

There are more carers...

The 2021 Australian Census shows the number of Victorian carers has jumped over 22% since 2016 compared to national growth of 15%.

This growth is likely to continue since most carers are supporting older Victorians and by 2025 it is expected that there will be 1.06 million carers in Victoria.

...they need better navigation support

Often people who require care have multiple needs that span a myriad of services and systems, each of which will often have its own processes, paperwork, people and requirements.

In the 2020 National Carer Survey, between 20 and 35% of carers consistently identified difficulty in finding information in each service system they must use.

- › Carers must navigate at least two systems to ensure adequate family-centered supports are in place for both themselves and people receiving care.
- › Continued reforms to service systems at both state and federal levels mean that many of the settings and providers of carer support services are changing, requiring carers to learn new systems.

...but recent changes to existing funding – and short-term funding – make it harder for providers to meet carer needs

Recent government reforms saw increased availability of funded support for carers in regional Victoria but at the cost of reduced services in metropolitan Melbourne. In addition, the absence of recurrent funding creates uncertainty for the sector's future.

The solutions

Expand funding for the Support for Carers Program and make it recurrent

With the number of carers increasing at the same time as the demands of the caring role grows, carers need respite and other supports now more than ever. Three key measures are required to meet that growing need:

- › Immediate restoration of funded carer supports in metropolitan Melbourne to the levels of access in place immediately prior to the Support for Carers Program reform process.
- › Growth in overall funding for carer supports through the Support for Carers Program (core and additional respite programs) in line with forecast growth in overall carer numbers.
- › Longer term certainty for this funding instead of the current arrangements

This will require growth in the overall recurrent investment in funded carer services to \$37.26 million per annum by 2026, including investment of over \$2 million per annum to immediately restore funded services in metropolitan Melbourne.

A funded state-wide Carer Advisory Service

A combination of phone and web-based support will allow carers and service providers to quickly access guidance on navigating multiple and complex systems.

This will save carers time and stress resulting in the improved health and wellbeing of carers and people receiving care as their needs are met more efficiently. This will require an investment of \$3 million over four years

What will it deliver?

More than 7,000 additional carers will have access to funded carer services by growing the overall recurrent investment in funding.

A state-wide Carer Advisory Service will provide timely help to more than 5,000 carers each year as well provide help to other organisations working with carers.