

# Stand with Carers: our ACT Election 2024 Campaign

Carer Directed Wellbeing and Respite Packages

CarersACT

## The ACT's carers deserve to choose what nourishes their wellbeing

### We believe that Canberrans should be able to:

- Choose how they spend their time, including taking breaks that nourish their wellbeing.
- Access a wide range of respite options that cater to individual needs and promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Receive the help they need to engage in activities that rejuvenate and maintain quality of life, especially for those in caring roles.



In the ACT more than 58,000 people provide care. Carers provide an important role in the family and in the broader community, supporting the quality of life of the person they care for.

Carers consistently report spending more time than desired on caring duties, and significantly less time doing things that contribute to their wellbeing, such as leisure activities, education, exercise, spending time with friends and family etc.

## The Problem

- Carers are twice as likely to have low wellbeing compared to other Australians, experiencing high levels of psychological distress and an increased risk of suicidality. Many carers feel that their quality of life is deteriorating.
- The majority of carers spend more time than they wish on caring duties and significantly less time on activities that contribute to their own wellbeing, such as leisure, education, exercise, and social interactions.
- Carers are often financially constrained, with many living in the lowest two income quintiles in Australia. This financial strain reduces their autonomy to address wellbeing issues and limits their ability to engage in self-care.
- Most carer-funded supports are rigid in their scope, offering little flexibility for carers to self-direct the supports they feel would positively influence their wellbeing.

## What Has Worked Before

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the ACT Government provided funding to Carers ACT to support carers under 30 who had been negatively impacted by the pandemic. The funds were distributed as \$600 Visa Gift Cards, allowing carers to manage their wellbeing, participate in education, or cover additional expenses

Feedback from carers was overwhelmingly positive, with many using the funds on wellbeing activities to rejuvenate their spirit and keep them caring through the pandemic.



## The Solution

We want an investment of \$500,000 for a grants-based program to build carer capacity with the resources they need to enhance their wellbeing. This program would:

- Provide up to \$300 in one-off payments to 650 carers, allowing them to choose activities that best support their wellbeing.
- Ensure eligibility is straightforward by requiring that carers are registered with Carers ACT, actively in a care relationship, and not receiving other concurrent wellbeing funding.
- Be managed by Carers ACT, covering applications, disbursements, and program evaluation. Information will be shared through our established communication channels, with packages available on a first-come, first-served basis.

This initiative builds on the success of the COVID-19 support program and complements the [Carers Guide to Respite and Wellbeing](#), which sees 'respite' as a positive outcome rather than just a location.

We want an ACT where carers have the choice to engage in nourishing activities that truly sustain their wellbeing and resilience. By investing in this program, the ACT community commits to caring for those who dedicate their lives to caring for others.

## Legislative and Policy Frameworks

- **Carers Recognition Act 2021 (ACT)** – The legislation mandates that carers must be supported in a way that allows them to maintain their wellbeing and quality of life. This proposed program aligns with the Act's principles by offering carers the choice and flexibility to engage in activities that sustain their wellbeing, ensuring they are acknowledged and valued.
- **ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028** – This program directly supports the Strategy's goals by providing carers with the resources and autonomy to choose respite activities that best meet their individual needs, helping them maintain their health and resilience.
- **ACT Wellbeing Framework** – The proposed program aligns with key domains of the ACT Wellbeing Framework, particularly the domain of 'Time' and will have impact across several domains including 'Health' (especially mental health), 'Social Connection', and 'Education and life-long learning'.