

Stand with Carers: our ACT Election 2024 Campaign

Carer Recognition Card

CarersACT

The ACT needs to recognise and support its carers with a Carer Recognition Card

We believe that all of Canberra's carers should be:

- Recognised and respected for the vital role they have in our community
- Easily identify themselves in various settings, ensuring their expertise is acknowledged and needs are met by the services they interact with
- Access the support and resources they deserve without barriers



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.

Only 13% of Canberra carers feel that other Australians are aware of the role that carers play in society and value their contribution.

The Problem

- Carers currently have no consistent means to demonstrate that they are a carer. They often feel dismissed by the wider community and professionals in government systems, healthcare, and education due to the lack of tangible recognition. This leads to various challenges affecting their well-being, access to resources, and overall vulnerability.
- In public situations, such as when managing an outburst by a care recipient, carers feel anxious and unsupported, as their role is not immediately understood or acknowledged.
- Carers who are ineligible for carer payments often do not recognise themselves as carers, leaving them unable to access vital services or respite. The term "carer" is increasingly associated with paid support workers, further diminishing the recognition of unpaid carers.

What's Working Elsewhere

Other regions in Australia and beyond have introduced innovative initiatives to recognise and support carers effectively. For example:

- The Victorian Government issues a Carer Card, providing carers with access to discounts and concessions similar to those offered to seniors. Eligibility is based on proof of receiving a Carer Payment or Allowance, or through medical evidence.
- In addition to a Carer Card similar to Victoria's, Queensland extends eligibility to foster and kinship carers, recognising the broad spectrum of caring roles within the community.

While the ACT's Companion Card is a valuable tool, it is designed for the care recipient rather than the carer. A Carer Recognition Card would focus solely on recognising and validating the carer, even when they are not accompanied by the person they care for.



The Solution

We want a commitment to a non-means tested Carer Recognition Card for our community of 58,000 carers. This card, endorsed by the ACT Government, would provide carers with a simple yet powerful tool to validate their role across various settings. By partnering with the government, Carers ACT will help develop the criteria and ensure that the card meets the needs of the carer community.

The Carer Recognition Card will not only reinforce the principles of the *Carers Recognition Act 2021 (ACT)* but also raise awareness, reduce stigma, and foster a sense of belonging among carers in the ACT.

We want to see an ACT where carers don't have to fight to be recognised and valued for their contributions. By implementing the Carer Recognition Card, the ACT can set a new standard for carer inclusion with the potential for national expansion, ensuring that carers feel supported and empowered in every aspect of their lives.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

- **The ACT Wellbeing Framework** – The Carer Recognition Card will contribute to the 'Identity and Belonging' domain by affirming the carer's role and fostering a sense of community. It will also enhance 'Health' outcomes by promoting better communication with healthcare professionals and reducing carer burnout. Additionally, the card will increase 'Access and connectivity by improving carers' knowledge of and access to supports, resources, and networks, and will strengthen 'Social Connections.'
- **ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028** – The Carer Recognition Card aligns with the strategy's goals of raising awareness, reducing stigma, and supporting carers in their role.
- **Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation in the ACT** – Carers ACT has recommended the creation of a government-issued, non-means tested Carer Recognition Card to address the issues of stigma, awareness, and support for carers. This card would help reduce social isolation, promote the visibility of carers, and support the government's broader objectives under the ACT Carers Strategy.
- **Carers Recognition Act 2021 (ACT)** – This card will serve as a tangible reinforcement of the Act, ensuring that carers are recognised, respected, and included in the community and by professionals in the systems they navigate.