

Stand with Carers: our ACT Election 2024 Campaign

Carer Wellbeing and Respite Hub

CarersACT

Carers need a wellbeing space they can call their own

We believe that Canberra's carers should be:

- Recognised by the ACT Government and community by having a dedicated wellbeing and respite centre.
- Provided with responsive, flexible and meaningful support.
- Provided with flexible, responsive and inclusive respite options.
- Supported by services and programs that are all in one place.
- Provided with a welcoming environment and choice of wellbeing activities.
- Provided increased opportunities for peer support and social connection.



"A place where I could go that would be for me, where I could just get some rest, get some help and maybe even talk to some people who understand? well that might just be lifechanging."

- Canberra Carer 2024

The Problem

Canberra Carers:

- Do not have access to resources, support services and their choice of wellbeing and respite activities in one purpose-built location.
- Often feel dismissed by the wider community and government due to the lack of tangible recognition. This leads to an increase in loneliness, isolation, low well-being and mental health.
- Without clear identification and positive recognition of their role, many withdraw from their community and are left without social connection and support. 12.5% of Canberra's carers report that they often feel lonely. This is a contrast to the 8.1% of the general population of Canberra who report often feeling lonely. Rates of isolation and loneliness amongst carers increases with the extent of their caring responsibilities, with those caring for more than 40 hours per week, experiencing even higher rates of loneliness and isolation.
- Carers ACT current premises at Holt, is a shared facility, mainly office space, within an old school. These premises are not purpose built, are unsafe, not welcoming, temperature cannot be regulated and does not meet the needs of carers. The current premises do not represent a community and government that cares for carers.
- While there is funding to support a range of programs for carers the difficulty is in providing these in locations that demonstrate the value the community has of carers, do not allow for growth and flexibility, are centric on the person needing care and not the carer, do not provide safe and welcoming spaces that nourish wellbeing and invite carers to take moments of respite.

What's Working Elsewhere

A carer's wellbeing and health is holistic, to lower the impact of caring we need to provide a visible centre of care that is flexible and responsive to carers needs and to their caring role.

The concept of a carer wellbeing and respite centre is a new idea that provides flexibility, wellbeing, respite options from 5 minutes to 5 weeks accommodation, navigation of service systems and connection.

The Victorian state Government has recently invested in care centres for mental health carers and the United Kingdom provides carer hubs that provide navigation and connection. Both are fine examples of supporting carer wellbeing and respite, however the proposed ACT carer wellbeing and respite centre will be holistic, responsive and flexible with the ever-changing needs of carers on their caring journey.



The Solution

- The ACT Government provides Carers ACT with land to build a Carer Wellbeing and Respite Centre.
- Carers ACT and its corporate partners will co-contribute by building and maintaining the facility.
- The first wellbeing and respite centre specifically for carers in the ACT would offer a safe, welcoming, contemporary and multipurpose facility for carers. The wellbeing and respite centre would include:
 - Quiet and welcoming accessible spaces to study, check emails or just read a book.
 - Purpose built facilities that provide replacement care for short or medium time periods
 - Access to allied health services such as coaching, counselling and potentially physical therapy.
 - Group activities and events designed to help decrease isolation and loneliness.
 - Peaceful sensory and productive gardens and green spaces.
 - Small meeting rooms offered to carers to hold meetings, manage their business, education or workloads in a private and quite environment.
 - Common areas such as kitchen and loungeroom providing further opportunities for peer support.
 - Wellbeing and physical fitness activities offered to improve carer's physical and mental health.
- The Better and Fairer Utilisation of Community Facility Zoned Land in Canberra has identified widespread underutilisation of land and suggested opportunities for supporting emerging community needs in partnership with not-for-profits. This proposal aligns to the proposal for the Carer Wellbeing and Respite Centre.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

Carers Recognition Act 2021 (ACT)

The ACT Carers Recognition Act 2021 is an important step towards making Canberra more inclusive and carer friendly. It generates much needed awareness regarding the important work that carers do to support the most vulnerable members of our community. It has measures in place to ensure we have proper practices to support carers and give them equal importance and recognition in the caring relationship.

The provision of a carer wellbeing and respite centre, perfectly aligns to the ACT's Principles of the treatment of carers, particularly, carers:

- Are respected and recognised as an individual with their own needs.
- Are recognised for their efforts and dedication, and for the social and economic contribution they make to the community, as a carer.
- Social wellbeing and health recognised in matters relating to the care relationship.
- Effect of their role as a carer on their participation in employment and education recognised and considered in decision-making.
- Provided with support that is timely, responsive, appropriate, respectful and accessible.

ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028

The vision of the ACT Carers Strategy is a community that cares for carers and the people they care for. The priorities of the strategy are recognition, education, access to information, ongoing engagement, enhanced support services and equitable treatment for carers. Relevant focus areas include:

- Information access - Improved access to relevant and current information means better access to information that meets the needs of carers.
- Ongoing carer engagement - Carers need to be involved in determining their own journey. Carers know the services they need to best support them in their caring role and these do not always align with what is perceived or offered as support.
- Enhanced support services - Improving support for carers is a responsibility of all levels of government and the broader community, and must take account of the diversity of carers and caring roles. All carers' needs are treated equitably.

ACT Wellbeing Framework

This proposal aligns with several Domains of the ACT Wellbeing Framework, particularly:

- Health (particularly mental health)
- Social Connectedness
- Identity and Belonging
- Time
- Community Participation
- Economic Participation
- Education and Life-long Learning