

New report highlights need for government support for informal mental health carers

Two peak Victorian carer bodies, Tandem and Carers Victoria, have today called on the Victorian State Government to protect existing supports and increase funding for mental health carers.

This urgent call to action follows the release of a major new report showing informal mental health carers contribute \$13.2 billion annually to care for a family member or friend with mental illness, 1.7 times more than government investment in mental health services nationally.

Commissioned by Mind Australia, the recently-released Queensland University report, *The economic value of informal mental health caring in Australia*, is a national first and demonstrates the need for Federal and State governments to ensure current support stays in place and funding increases for informal mental health carers.

The report reveals for the first time the significant scope and economic value of informal mental health caring in Australia. The report found:

- An estimated 240,000 Australians care for an adult with mental illness. Based on the percentage of the population residing in Victoria, this means there are approximately 60,000 mental health carers in Victoria.
- The majority of informal mental health carers are working age females.
- A substantial proportion of mental health carers are young people under the age of 25 (14.7%). This means approximately 9,000 young Victorians are currently caring for people with a mental illness.
- To replace informal mental health care with formal support would cost **\$13.2 billion, which is 1.7 times the current national expenditure on all mental health-related services in Australia.**

“Tandem applauds this research supporting the long held understanding that families and friends (Carers) provide vital support to those facing mental health challenges and as such make an enormous contribution to the Australian community. As highlighted, this care can come at enormous personal cost. The challenge is for our governments to ensure Carers are not inadvertent victims of collateral damage by recognising the extent, quality and value of this contribution and supporting it accordingly”, said Marie Piu, CEO, Tandem, Victorian peak body for mental health carers.

“Carers Victoria is extremely concerned about the number of carers exiting the workforce, giving up social connections and sacrificing their own wellbeing due to a lack of support for their carer responsibilities,” said Caroline Mulcahy, Chief Executive Officer of Carers Victoria.

In light of the report, Tandem and Carers Victoria are calling for the government to recognise the significant value of informal mental health carers in Australia, and:

- Sustain existing supports and increase funding for mental health carers

- Clarify how carers' needs will be assessed in the NDIS to ensure supports are adequately included in funding packages as independent and separate items from those of the care recipient's
- Ensure all mental health carers have access to vital funded supports, through earmarking some of the funds from Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) and Integrated Carer Support System for mental health carers.

Tandem and Carers Victoria are calling on the Victorian government to put measures in place to ensure national reforms currently in the pipeline, the NDIS, the Integrated Carer Support Services, and the review of carer payment and allowance, do not have a negative impact on mental health carers, and that Victorian services are put into place to provide a higher level of support for mental health carers than currently exists.

The full report is available [HERE](#) on Mind Australia's website

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Tandem

Tandem was established in 1994 and is the Victorian peak body for Mental Health families/carers. Tandem is a not for profit, community based organisation. Tandem promotes and advocates for family/carer involvement in treatment and recovery of people living with mental health challenges, family/carer participation in planning, delivery and evaluation of mental health services and appropriate support for families/carers. Our principal areas of work are: systemic advocacy, contributing to mental health policy development, information provision, development, delivery and promotion of family inclusive training for the mental health workforce, support and training of the Carer Lived Experience workforce, Participation in the DHHS NDIS Transition group and administration of the Victorian Carer Support Fund.

Carers Victoria

Carers Victoria was established in 1992 and is recognised and funded as the peak body for carers and caring families in Victoria, working collaboratively with Carers Australia and the other state and territory-based Carer Associations to represent and advocate, and provide carer services on behalf of carers throughout Australia. Carers Victoria's core work includes:

- Being the 'voice' of carers
- Raising awareness of carers and caring in Victorian communities
- Being the place to go for all carers and for information about carers
- Providing effective, quality services and programs to support the needs of carers and the people they care for, including statewide counselling and mental health support for all carers
- Research, policy development and effective advocacy to inform Government, communities and service providers on the needs of people in care relationships.

For more information, or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Deanna Vener, on 03 8803 5502; deanna.vener@tandemcarers.org.au

Kat Szuhan on 03 9248 9648; kat.szuhan@carersvictoria.org.au