

# SUPPORTING OUR CARERS

## MORE SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION FOR ACT CARERS

Unpaid carers play a critical role supporting others to live more enjoyable and fulsome lives. Almost anyone can become a carer at some point in their life, or need a carer to meet their basic needs.

Around 50,000 people in the ACT provide unpaid care to family members or friends who need support because of disability, chronic illness, mental illness, drug or alcohol issues, dementia or frailty due to ageing.

But carers are often not recognised for their significant efforts to make someone's life more enriching. Instead they sacrifice their own needs, and at times their own health and wellbeing, to instead care for those around them.

That's why the ACT Greens will go further to promote the role of carers in our community and support them to ensure their own needs are met, so our society is fairer to their needs as well as those of the people they support.

Our plan will recognise, value and support all carers.

### THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Provide land for a carers respite service
- ▲ Co-design and implement a Carers Card

## RESPIRE FACILITY

Caring for another person can be rewarding, but it also places additional demands on the carer. Carers often face extra challenges in their lives and sacrifice things that support their own wellbeing. This can include their social life, financial wellbeing, and their own mental and physical health needs.

The need for specialised respite facilities in the ACT is growing with our population. The proportion of our population living longer with health conditions that require daily living support is increasing. Simultaneously, cuts to the NDIS and inadequate aged care support is putting more and more pressure on carers.

Respite gives carers the opportunity to look after themselves, while also ensuring the people they care for are ok. It is a temporary break from caring to recharge, have time to plan and organise for the future, and enjoy some time and opportunities to meet other carers.

The Greens will gift ACT Government land to Carers ACT for this facility. They will then design, build and operate a respite facility in the ACT that will benefit carers, the people they care for, and the ACT Community.

### INVESTMENT:

- Foregone revenue of \$4.5m.

## CARERS CARD

Carers face many barriers to accessing the services, support and reasonable adjustments they need, both to look after the people they care for and to protect their own health and wellbeing.

Among these barriers is a requirement to complete bureaucratic processes, often repeatedly and in multiple settings, to be recognised as a carer and to access the support and adjustments they need.

Carers often struggle to have their role recognised, even by health care professionals, and this adds unnecessary burdens to their lives.

The Carers Card will recognise and respect their role as partners in care, avoid repeating paperwork and unlock the support carers need.

It will recognise a person's status as a carer, and the important role carers play.

Carers know the people they care for, and their needs and preferences, better than anyone else. They provide ongoing support and continuity of care outside of health services, and are often the best source of information on their needs. The card will value the carer's input into decisions around clinical needs and broader care for the person they care for.

The Carers Card will also unlock an understanding of the carer's needs in a range of settings, streamlining the process of getting these needs met. It will support them to provide care in health settings as they do at home, to be included in decisions about the people they care for, to find solutions to barriers they face in accessing education and employment, and to be a part of the community with better recognition of the critical role they play.

The Carer Card will not be the same as a Companion Card, and the Companion Card will still be available to eligible people. Key differences include:

- There will be no requirement for the carer to be in the company of the person they care for to access the benefits of the carer card.
- The Companion Card is largely used to access discounts. The Carer Card will provide opportunities for a broader range of support, such as longer visiting hours in healthcare settings, reasonable adjustments to carers in education, easier access to leave provisions at work, and respite services.
- Streamline the processes required for carers to discuss any reasonable adjustments they need to care for others and themselves.

### **INVESTMENT:**

- Use existing resources to co-design the card program.
- The co-design process will outline the scope of the program and determine the cost to fund the program.