

Queensland Carers Advisory Council

Meeting Communiqué

8 July 2019

The Queensland Carers Advisory Council met on Monday 8 July 2019 to discuss a range of issues affecting carers. This was the second of three Council meetings held each year.

Meeting participants included carers, Teresa Pilbeam and Semah Mokak-Wischki, and organisational representatives, Debra Cottrell (Carers Queensland), Sarah Mitchell (Centacare), Donna Shkalla (UnitingCare) and Irene Clelland (Arafmi). The Departments of Health, Education, and Communities, Disability Services and Seniors were also represented.

The Honourable Coralee O'Rourke MP, Minister for Disability Services and Seniors, attended the meeting to talk with Council members and hear carers' perspectives on current issues.

The focus of the meeting was on carer legislation and policy, one of the priorities identified by members in the Council's work plan. Members' discussion of the topic was supported by a background paper providing an overview of the *Carers (Recognition) Act (Qld)* and other legislation and policy providing recognition, support or protection for carers, as well as comparisons with other jurisdictions.

To further inform their discussions, members appreciated the opportunity to hear about the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* from Neroli Holmes and Celia Wigzell from the Queensland Human Rights Commission (formerly the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland). The *Act* will commence in its entirety on 1 January 2020.

As an entity established under Queensland Government legislation, the Queensland Carers Advisory Council will be required to comply with the *Act* i.e. to consider human rights outlined in the *Act* in advice to the Minister and any other actions. Members discussed reviewing the alignment of the *Carers (Recognition) Act (Qld)*, in particular, the Carers Charter within the *Act*, with the rights outlined in the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)*.

Helen Ferguson from the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors outlined the department's review of the *Disability Services Act 2006 (Qld)* in light of the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and changing role of the Queensland Government in the disability sector.

Members felt that while the *Carers (Recognition) Act (Qld)* had improved awareness of the contribution of carers when it was first introduced, consideration could be given to updating the *Act* to align with more contemporary thinking regarding recognition and support for carers.

In light of members' recommendations for improving the health and wellbeing of carers at the last meeting, Minister O'Rourke has written to Ministers in the Australian Government advocating improved access to respite for carers, extending access to Australian Government financial support for carers to grandparents who look after children on a full-time basis, and improving access to bulk billing for general practitioner services for all carers.

Representatives from the Departments of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors; Health; and Child Safety, Youth and Women have also met to discuss improving support for grandparents who look after children full-time.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 2019.