



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Social Policy and Legal Affairs report:

Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers

March 2026

Australian Government response to the Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers

Contents

- Introduction 3
 - Summary of the inquiry 3
 - Summary of the recommendations and the Government’s position 3
- Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers..... 5
 - Recommendations made by the Committee..... 5
 - Recommendation 1..... 5
 - Recommendation 2..... 5
 - Recommendation 3..... 6
 - Recommendation 4..... 6
 - Recommendation 5..... 6
 - Recommendation 6..... 7
 - Recommendation 7..... 7
 - Recommendation 8..... 7
 - Recommendation 9..... 8
 - Recommendation 10..... 8
 - Recommendation 11..... 9
 - Recommendation 12..... 9
 - Recommendation 13..... 10
 - Recommendation 14..... 11
 - Recommendation 15..... 11
 - Recommendation 16..... 12
 - Recommendation 17..... 12
 - Recommendation 18..... 13
 - Recommendation 19..... 13
 - Recommendation 20..... 14
 - Recommendation 21..... 15
 - Recommendation 22..... 15
- Australian Government response to the Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers 2

Introduction

The Australian Government welcomes the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs' Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers.

Summary of the inquiry

On 13 June 2023, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs (the Committee) adopted an inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers, following a referral from the former Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP.

Carers make significant contributions to the economy and society. Caring responsibilities can have a direct and lasting impact on the physical, mental and financial wellbeing of carers. The Committee examined the challenges faced by unpaid carers and options for reforming the *Carer Recognition Act 2010* (Cth) (the Act) and made 22 recommendations.

The Committee held public hearings in Canberra via video and audio broadcasts from across Australia. A range of stakeholders were consulted, including individual unpaid carers, carer representatives and advocacy organisations, community service providers, academic research groups and government agencies. A total of 143 submissions were received.

On 27 March 2024, the Committee tabled its report, *Recognising, valuing and supporting unpaid carers*.

The Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers was the last inquiry overseen by Committee Chair, Peta Murphy, who sadly passed away in December 2023. Peta was passionate about better understanding and recognising the significant contribution of unpaid carers and their challenges. Peta dedicated her career to advocating for others and encouraging government to strive for better outcomes for the community. Her immense contribution to Parliament and to the Australian public throughout her life has had immeasurable impact.

Summary of the recommendations and the Government's position

The Government would like to thank all those who participated in the inquiry. We particularly acknowledge the unpaid carers who shared their experiences and ideas for improving the wellbeing of carers and those they care for.

The Government welcomes the findings of the Committee. The Government values the immense contribution carers make to society, and the economy, and is committed to ensuring carers have access to supports to assist them in their caring role.

The Committee's recommendations provide a valuable contribution to the policy discussion about unpaid carers in Australia. The recommendations suggest meaningful changes to the Act to improve recognition of unpaid carers and acknowledge their contribution to Australian society. The recommendations also propose changes to the Carer Gateway program to further improve access and supports to services for carers, and identify areas of focus within the context of developing the new National Carer Strategy 2024-2034 (the Strategy) and Action Plan 2024-2027 (the Action Plan).

The Government acknowledges that care challenges have particular impacts on the physical, emotional, and financial well-being of carers, and that carers may experience social isolation. This Government response highlights the Government's strong commitment to an inclusive and supportive approach to improving support for unpaid carers and recognising the important contribution they make to Australian society.

The Government wants carers in Australia to feel recognised, respected, valued and supported. On 10 December 2024 we upheld our election promise and launched the Strategy and Action Plan. While the Government notes that some of the Committee's recommendations are consistent with government policy and are being progressed through the Strategy, others require detailed consideration, research and costings with regard to broader budgetary implications and legislative context.

Of the 22 recommendations made by the Committee, the Government:

- a. supports 5 recommendations (10, 11, 13, 16 and 22), which are in the process of being developed or implemented, or for which the intent, including the approach to implementation, is supported.
- b. supports 12 recommendations in principle (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 18 and 19) as the broader intent of these recommendations are aligned to work that is currently underway or for which the intent of the recommendation is supported but the government may wish to consider the most appropriate approach to implementation.
- c. notes the remaining 5 recommendations (4, 15, 17, 20 and 21).

Government responses to individual recommendations are set out in the table below:

Recommendation	Response
1	Supported in principle
2	Supported in principle
3	Supported in principle
4	Noted
5	Supported in principle
6	Supported in principle
7	Supported in principle
8	Supported in principle
9	Supported in principle
10	Supported
11	Supported
12	Supported in principle
13	Supported
14	Supported in principle
15	Noted
16	Supported
17	Noted
18	Supported in principle
19	Supported in principle
20	Noted
21	Noted
22	Supported

Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers

Recommendations made by the Committee

Recommendation 1

- 2.131 The Committee recommends that the meaning of carer under section 5 of the *Carer Recognition Act 2010* (the Act) be modernised and contextualised as a ‘care relationship’ to be more inclusive of the diversity of caring roles and to make it easier for carers to self-identify.
- 2.132 The Committee considers that a person is in a ‘care relationship’ with another person if the first person (the carer) provides care for one or more of the following reasons:
- the other person has a disability
 - the other person is experiencing mental ill health
 - the other person has a medical condition, including a terminal or chronic illness
 - the other person is frail and/or aged
 - the other person is experiencing alcohol or other drug dependence.
- 2.133 The Committee considers the Act should specify that:
- a person can be in multiple care relationships
 - children and young people under the age of 25 who provide care are young carers.

Supported in principle

The Australian Government will explore amendments to the definition of ‘carer’ to be more inclusive of the diversity of caring roles to make it easier for carers to self-identify and ensure that it reflects the range of assistance and support carers provide to the people they care for. The Government will undertake detailed consideration of all proposed amendments to the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*. A modernised definition of carer will require detailed consideration within the various legislative frameworks where the role is recognised, including the Act. In addition, terms such as ‘mental ill health’ or ‘mental illness’ are broad and will be considered further for national consistency. It is noted that alcohol and drug dependence are widely recognised in the medical community as forms of mental illness.

Commitment 3 in the Action Plan outlines the Government’s response to the Inquiry recommendation to contemporise the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*.

Recommendation 2

- 2.135 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government works with the states and territories to harmonise the definition of carer across all carer recognition legislation, acknowledging respective Australian Government and state and territory care arrangements, and in data collection and reporting about the value of unpaid care.

Supported in principle

The Australian Government will work with states and territories, on the harmonisation of the definition of ‘carer’ or ‘care relationship’ subject to the detailed consideration foreshadowed in Recommendation 1 and Commitment 3 in the Action Plan.

State and territory Carers Acts vary on coverage of kinship/foster care relationships within their individual jurisdictions. The Commonwealth's focus is solely on unpaid carers which does not include people undertaking normal day to day care of children, whether a parent or non-parent, kinship, grandparent or in foster care relationships (where the children do not have additional needs for support due to disability, medical conditions, or mental ill health).

Recommendation 3

2.136 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government conduct a review of all federal laws relating to carers, and make amendments where needed, to ensure consistency with the revised Act. The review should be conducted within one year of the revised Act being established.

Supported in principle

Subject to the detailed consideration of the legislative approach foreshadowed in the response to Recommendation 1, the Australian Government will undertake work to identify other carer-relevant legislation needing to be harmonised, as outlined in Commitment 3 in the Action Plan.

Recommendation 4

2.140 The Committee recommends that, by December 2024, the Australian Government seek legal advice to determine how best to establish rights for carers. These rights should include:

- being acknowledged as partners in care
- being involved in planning and policy development
- being provided with information regarding the person they care for in order to provide care
- accessing flexible work arrangements.

Noted

The Australian Government supports the protection of the rights and freedoms of all Australians, including carers.

Recommendation 5

2.143 The Committee recommends that the Statement for Australia's Carers is amended to include explicit recognition of:

- First Nations carers
- culturally and linguistically diverse carers
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual and other sexually or gender diverse (LGBTIQ+) carers
- young carers.

Supported in principle

The Australian Government will consider the explicit recognition of the nominated populations to be more inclusive of the diversity of carers in the Statement for Australia's Carers. This will form part of the detailed consideration of the *Carer Recognition Act 2010* foreshadowed in response to Recommendation 1 and as outlined in Action Plan Commitment 3.

Recommendation 6

2.147 The Committee recommends that the definition of ‘public service care agency’ under section 4 of the Act, and any further reference to ‘public service care agency’ is omitted.

Supported in principle

The Australian Government will consider how to apply all current and proposed obligations to the broader category of all public service agencies, specifically in relation to the outcomes for Recommendation 7. This will form part of the detailed consideration of the *Carer Recognition Act 2010* foreshadowed in the response to Recommendation 1 and Commitment 3 in the Action Plan.

Recommendation 7

2.148 The Committee recommends that Part 3 of the Act be amended to require all public service agencies and associated providers to:

- take all practicable measures to ensure that it and its employees and agents have an awareness of, and take action to, reflect the principles of the Statement for Australia’s Carers in developing, implementing, providing or evaluating care supports
- develop internal human resources policies, so far as they may significantly affect an employee’s caring role, having due regard to the Statement for Australia’s Carers
- consult carers, or bodies that represent carers, when developing or evaluating care supports.

2.149 In addition, all public service agencies should be required to, in each reporting period, prepare a report that is to be included in the agency’s annual report, on:

- the agency’s compliance with its obligations under the Act
- its associated providers’ compliance with their obligations under the Act.

Supported in principle

The Australian Government agrees that all public service agencies (and associated providers) should consider the needs of unpaid carers in relation to their portfolio responsibilities, regardless of whether those agencies have carer-related policies, programs or services in place.

The Government will consider what mechanisms are appropriate to ensure oversight and accountability from public service agencies. The proposals in Recommendation 7 will form part of the detailed consideration of the *Carer Recognition Act 2010* foreshadowed in the response to Recommendation 1 and Commitment 3 in the Action Plan.

The Australian Public Service (APS) workforce includes staff who identify as being in caring roles. APS wide flexible work arrangements support employees, including carers, to maintain their wellbeing and improve capacity to ensure business continuity. Flexible working arrangements enable the APS to better attract and retain talent and build more diverse and inclusive workplaces. These flexible ways of working are helping to position the APS as a model employer, with the capability it needs to do its job well.

Recommendation 8

2.151 The Committee recommends that the Act be amended to include a provision that requires the Minister, every five years, to review the operation and effectiveness of the Act, the Statement for Australia’s Carers, and the National Carer Strategy. A report on the Minister’s review must be tabled in Parliament.

Supported in principle

The Australian Government acknowledges the importance of accountability and transparency in the administration of legislation and development of policy. This will form part of the detailed consideration of the *Carer Recognition Act 2010* foreshadowed in the response to Recommendation 1 and Commitment 3 in the Action Plan. The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) will lead the development and review of carer-related policies, including identifying opportunities for improvement.

Recommendation 9

3.117 The Committee recommends that, in the next funding agreement, the Australian Government ensure there is a simple process for carers to gain support when it is most needed and strengthen the supports provided to carers via Carer Gateway by:

- improving the quality and consistency of advice and client service by Carer Gateway support providers through enhanced training and performance monitoring
- expanding the operating hours of the helpline, including providing access to 24-hour crisis support
- better integrating Carer Gateway with other key services that carers interact with, such as My Aged Care, the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Centrelink
- relaxing requirements for carer assessments to be conducted in order to access support and ensuring that, under normal circumstances, carers receive no more than one assessment each year
- allowing carers more flexibility to access supports that meet their needs such as practical and physical help at home
- providing transparency around what supports carers are eligible to access, and more agency to carers to decide how to spend their support budgets.

3.118 These reforms should be co-designed with carers and carers representatives.

Supported in principle

The Australian Government supports in principle a simple process for carers to gain support when it is most needed and strengthen the supports provided to carers via Carer Gateway.

The Strategy was co-designed with carers and carer representatives. Under the Action Plan, the Government has committed to review and improve specific services offered through Carer Gateway to support the wellbeing of carers. Commitment 1 includes consideration of the proposals put forward in Recommendation 9.

Recommendation 10

3.121 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government work with the carer sector to identify capacity building for high-quality, respite care options that are appropriate for a diverse range of carers and the people they care for, including those that require complex care.

Supported

Under the Action Plan, the Australian Government has committed to identifying strategies to improve access to respite arrangements at Commitment 1.

Throughout the implementation of the Strategy, the Government is continuing to work with the carer sector to identify strategies to improve respite care arrangements in partnership with relevant policy and regulatory agencies.

The Government funds a range of respite care options, including through the NDIS and aged care systems, as well as the Carer Gateway.

The Government also currently funds dementia-specific respite initiatives under the ‘Improving respite care for people living with dementia and their carers’ program. These initiatives support both the person living with dementia and their carer. The program aims to improve the quality and experience of dementia respite care through innovative respite models, which support a diverse range of carers. This includes First Nations peoples and people of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Recommendation 11

3.123 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government examine how to increase access to high-quality counselling and mental health support options for a diverse range of carers.

Supported

Under the Action Plan, the Australian Government has committed to reviewing and improving specific services offered through Carer Gateway to support the wellbeing of carers through Commitment 1. This involves working with the carer sector to examine how to further improve the access, quality and range of counselling and mental health supports. This includes linkages and referrals to other mainstream and complementary services and increased access to phone counselling services by funding up to an additional 10,000 counselling sessions per year.

The Carer Gateway program currently provides carers with access to counselling services to help support their wellbeing and mental health through two mechanisms: Carer Gateway national phone counselling service; and in-person counselling services provided by Carer Gateway service providers.

The Carer Gateway website also provides mental health support information and linkages to other service systems support options, including access to an online community forum providing carers a safe, moderated space to come together and ask questions, share advice and experiences, providing both mental health and emotional support

Carer Gateway service providers can assist carers with navigation of, and referral to, other service systems that provide mental health support including Commonwealth programs, local and state/territory funded programs.

The Australian Government also currently funds a range of services and programs for the full diversity of carers who support a person with dementia through DHDA. This includes professional counselling and carer support groups and resources, dementia behaviour support, dementia-specific respite programs, and dementia education and training.

Recommendation 12

3.125 The Committee recommends that the new National Carer Strategy prioritise carers’ health and wellbeing, including through:

- the implementation of standardised assessment frameworks for carers in healthcare settings
- training for practitioners and other workers who interact with carers in identifying and supporting carers
- consistent reporting of carer suicides and suicidality.

Supported in principle

The Strategy was co-designed with carers and provides a vision and the foundation for Australia’s carers to be supported focusing on their health and wellbeing. The Strategy aims to progress and support positive change to ensure carers have the right support at the right time so they can better balance their caring role with all aspects of their lives.

Under the Action Plan Commitment 2, the Australian Government is also exploring ways to improve professional training for practitioners and sector workers to better recognise and identify unpaid carers. Currently there is work in progress to train practitioners and other workers who interact with carers. This includes the Government funding a range of dementia training and education programs for the aged and healthcare sectors through DHDA, to improve supports available to carers of people with dementia.

The Government has also established a national network of 10 Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs) to provide industry with a stronger, more strategic voice in ensuring Australia’s vocational education and training sector delivers stronger outcomes for learners and employers.

HumanAbility, the JSC for the aged care and disability, children’s education and care, health, human services, and sport and recreation sectors is responsible for the development of nationally recognised training products including qualifications and skill sets that support workers in the care and support sector, including workers that interact with carers. This includes ensuring that national training products are responsive to current and emerging skills requirements, and support workers with the skills and knowledge they need to meet the needs of the individuals they support and interact with.

Recommendation 13

- 3.128 The Committee recommends that the new National Carer Strategy include targeted support for First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) carers, including:
- enhanced training and guidelines to encourage cultural safety and appropriate support for diverse communities for Carer Gateway service providers
 - fostering collaborative links between Carer Gateway service providers and First Nations and CALD community organisations to encourage culturally diverse carers to seek support and to help them navigate the support system
 - funding for First Nations and CALD community organisations to deliver Carer Gateway services
 - establishing diversity targets to encourage greater engagement by Carer Gateway service providers with diverse communities and more diversity in service users.

Supported

Under the Action Plan Commitment 1, the Australian Government is reviewing and improving specific services offered through Carer Gateway to support the wellbeing of carers. This involves identifying appropriate and culturally safe training, upskilling and enhancing cultural capability of all service providers including First Nations and CALD community-led organisations and the carer sector where appropriate. Under Action Plan Commitment 4, the lived experience of carers from First Nations, CALD and LGBTQIA+ communities is guiding continual improvement.

Carer Gateway service providers are required to report on activities conducted to deliver Carer Gateway supports and services to specific populations including First Nations and CALD carers.

DHDA is continuing to monitor Carer Gateway service provider reporting regarding the number of First Nations and CALD carers accessing the service and other available datasets, research and evidence to inform any future changes around implementing targets and service delivery requirements for specific carer cohorts.

Cultural safety and addressing racism in the health system is a key priority under the [*National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021-2031*](#) (Workforce Plan).

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021- 2031 (Workforce Plan) released in 2022 and has the key objective to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the health workforce and strengthen the cultural safety of the health system.

Overall, the Workforce Plan has six overarching strategic directions and 47 implementation strategies to attract, recruit and retain First Nations health workers. Each implementation strategy identifies the Lead, Partner and Support organisations.

The Government is committed to working with key stakeholders, including services supporting people with disability to support implementation of the Workforce Plan. Ongoing partnership with the sector will enable and support the co-design of governance and accountability frameworks for implementation of the Workforce Plan.

The recommendation’s focus on increasing the provision of carer support services by the First Nations community-controlled sector to align with Priority Reform 2 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap: ‘Building the community-controlled sector’.

Other complementary examples include the Integrated Care and Commissioning Project that is trialing collaborative, place-based and innovative approaches to improve care services for people living in regional, rural and remote communities, and for First Nations peoples in targeted urban areas. Strengthening the delivery of culturally safe care services will assist carers from diverse backgrounds to better navigate the support system.

Recommendation 14

3.130 The Committee recommends that, by December 2024, the suite of available training options offered by Carer Gateway be expanded to include manual handling, first aid, medication management and wound care, mental health first aid and suicide intervention. Options for in-person and online training should be provided.

Supported in principle

Under the Action Plan Commitment 1, the Australian Government aims to identify appropriate and culturally safe in-person and online training being provided via Carer Gateway to support unpaid carers to build the knowledge and skills they need to fulfil their caring role. Training offers may include manual handling, first aid, medication management and wound care, financial literacy, mental health first aid and suicide intervention training modules.

The Carer Gateway website currently provides online self-paced learning modules to help carers meet their own needs while in the caring role, including modules dealing with stress, sleep and legal issues. The website also provides general information and referrals to other resources on moving and lifting people safely, managing medication in an emergency, and caring for someone with a mental illness. As part of the ongoing administration and continual improvement of the Carer Gateway, the Government is identifying opportunities to improve online training options.

Carer Gateway service providers can assist carers with access to training relevant to their circumstances, including the topics identified in the recommendation, through a tailored support package. This may complement access to any training already available to carers through other service systems. Carer Gateway service providers can assist with linking carers to other service systems and can provide training to help them in their caring role or for the workforce.

Recommendation 15

3.134 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a process to handle complaints and address breaches of the Carer Recognition Act 2010.

Noted

The Australian Government notes the recommendation. The *Carer Recognition Act 2010* provides recognition of carers but does not include explicit rights or obligations. The requirement for a complaints process will be considered in the context of the detailed consideration foreshadowed in the response to Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the new National Carer Strategy:

- gives effect to the principles of the Act
- includes actions to address the negative impacts that caring has on carers’ financial security, their mental and physical wellbeing, and their social relationships
- is co-designed and monitored by carers and their representatives
- has robust action plans, outcomes measurement and reporting and evaluation frameworks.

Supported

The Strategy was developed in consultation with unpaid carers, including intensive in-person consultations in all states and territories, in metropolitan, regional and remote locations as well as online consultations and submissions received via the Department of Social Services’ ‘DSS Engage’ website. This work was guided by the National Carer Strategy Advisory Committee, whose membership included 15 carers and sector representatives. The Advisory Committee represented the views of carers and their representatives and provided feedback and advice during each stage of the development and finalisation of the Strategy.

The Strategy considered issues including, but not limited to:

- addressing the holistic needs of unpaid carers, including physical and mental health, financial wellbeing, and access to respite care
- better understanding and addressing the perspectives and unique challenges of First Nations carers and diverse communities, including young carers, to provide more culturally relevant and tailored services and support that better meet their unique needs
- localised care models and services, designed in collaboration with carer communities
- simplifying and streamlining administrative barriers to reduce the burden on carers and improving access.

The Strategy is being delivered through an initial suite of actions, with monitoring and review that will determine what further action may be needed to deliver on the Strategy’s vision. An ongoing Carer Advisory Committee will be appointed by the Australian Government to provide advice and oversee the implementation, monitoring, reviews and evaluation of the Strategy. Under the Action Plan Commitment 4 the Government is ensuring the lived experience of carers guides continual improvement.

Recommendation 17

3.138 The Committee recommends that the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ (ABS) Survey of Disability and Carers (SDAC) be redesigned prior to the conduct of the 2025 survey to be representative of all carers as defined in a revised Act.

3.139 The ABS should develop actions to ensure that First Nations carers, CALD carers and LGBTIQ+ carers are accurately represented in the SDAC.

Noted

The Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers (SDAC) will not be conducted in 2025. The ABS will review the definition of carer and redesign relevant parts of the survey as appropriate prior to the next SDAC cycle.

The SDAC is designed to provide information at the national level. Actions to provide more granular information for the specific population groups referenced in paragraph 3.139 would require a change in the survey design, as well as a substantial increase in sample size and funding.

The Australian Government has identified that improved data is required for diverse groups. DHDA with the assistance of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare will conduct a data audit to establish what can be identified from the aged care diversity data available. Subsequently this will help to identify diversity data gaps and plan for future data enrichment.

Recommendation 18

3.141 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- fund research and data mapping of carers
- review the scope and design of the Carer Wellbeing Survey to ensure that it is representative of all carers, is longitudinal and collects sufficient evidence about carers’ health, wellbeing, and suicide risk factors.

Supported in principle

The Australian Government supports developing more comprehensive data standards for collecting data on carers across various Commonwealth and state and territory data collections. These issues are being explored under the Action Plan Commitment 6 which aims to understand the full carer landscape through improved data capture.

In addition, the Government will consider reviewing the scope and design of the Carer Wellbeing Survey or alternatives to capture nationally representative carer statistics and national estimates of carers in Australia, including the sample selection methodology for longitudinal analyses of carers’ health, wellbeing and suicide risk factors.

Recommendation 19

3.144 The Committee recommends that gender equality be included as a key priority of the new National Carer Strategy, to be addressed by actions that:

- overcome harmful gender norms that devalue caring roles and disadvantage women
- encourage more men to become carers and improve access to the types of supports men need
- address the financial disadvantages carers experience over their lifetime.

Supported in principle

As part of the development of the Strategy, the Australian Government considered the priorities identified in Recommendation 19 regarding gender equity being consistent with the Government’s approach to gender responsive budgeting. The Government recognises the impact on participation in paid work of caring roles, which are disproportionately performed by women. The Strategy acknowledges the intersectionality of carers and commits to focus efforts on addressing gender stereotypes of care.

Gender equality is a key priority for the Government. In 2024, the Government released ‘*Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality (Working for Women)*’. *Working for Women* outlines the Government’s vision for gender equality – an Australia where people are safe, treated with respect, have choices, and have access to resources and equal outcomes no matter their gender.

A core focus of *Working for Women* is valuing the disproportionate levels of unpaid care that women provide. This gender imbalance in unpaid care has significant impacts on women’s lifelong economic security.

Gender stereotypes can also negatively impact men and perpetuate gender inequality. Along with existing social structures and systems, these stereotypes can make it difficult for fathers to be highly involved at home and in family life. *Working for Women* outlines how gender equality will ultimately benefit everyone by challenging rigid gender norms and supporting men to be more active parents and carers.

Working for Women is about supporting choice and flexibility including how women and men balance work and care to ensure people aren't financially disadvantaged by taking time out of the workforce to provide care.

Recommendation 20

3.148 The Committee recommends that the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) review Australian Public Service employment principles and workplace policies and practices for compliance with a revised Act and provide best practice guidance and examples. The APSC should commence the review one year after a revised Act has been established.

Noted

The Australian Government notes this recommendation. The Government is committed to being a model employer and providing support for employees who are carers.

As part of the recent APS-wide enterprise bargaining, the Commonwealth published a common clause on Flexible Working Arrangements. The Flexible Working Arrangements common clause supports all Commonwealth employees, including carers, to access a range of flexibilities. These include compressed working arrangements, part-time arrangements, altering the hours in which work can be performed, working from home arrangements and options to change work location.

Requests for flexible working arrangements are to be considered on their individual merits, with a bias to approval. The common clause recognises that flexibility applies to all roles and different types of flexible working arrangements may be suitable for different types of roles or circumstances.

Another outcome of bargaining is strengthened recognition of carers to enable better self-identification in personal/carers leave clauses.

These provisions in enterprise agreements remain in place until re-negotiated. The APS enterprise agreements are due to nominally expire in early 2027.

APS agencies are responsible for their own workplace policies and practices, with the APSC able to assist in providing policy guidance on matters such as implementation of the common conditions including personal/carers leave and flexible working arrangements. Noting the broader nature of policies and practices that may impact carers, the APSC is well placed to support agencies in the dissemination of materials to promote best practice.

In future bargaining rounds, further consideration will be given to updating supports for carers. The APS Consultative Committee also provides an avenue for DHDA to consult with other APS agencies and employee representatives on the implementation of revised legislation.

Recommendation 21

3.150 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government introduce an income tax credit for carers returning to the paid workforce and consider other options to incentivise and recognise the impact of caring through the income tax and superannuation systems.

Noted

The Australian Government is committed to reducing barriers to workforce participation for all Australians, including those with unpaid care responsibilities. The design of the tax-transfer system is one of several factors that can support people to re-engage and engage more with paid work.

The Government has legislated new personal income tax cuts for every Australian taxpayer from 1 July 2026, adding to the first round of tax cuts that commenced on 1 July 2024. The Government’s tax cuts will improve incentives to work, especially for low-income and part time workers who are predominantly women. The Government’s combined tax cuts are expected to increase total hours worked by about 1.3 million hours per week compared to 2023–24 tax settings, equivalent to more than 30,000 full-time jobs. This increase is driven mostly by women, who are expected to increase their labour supply by 900,000 hours per week compared to 2023–24 tax settings.

The Government has also now legislated the payment of superannuation guarantee equivalent contributions on government-funded Paid Parental Leave, for parents of babies born or adopted on or after 1 July 2025.

This recognises the important contribution parents make to society, by reducing the impact career breaks to care for young children have on superannuation balances and reducing the gender gaps in superannuation balances at retirement.

Recommendation 22

3.152 The Committee recommends that an ongoing community education campaign form part of the new National Carer Strategy. The campaign should:

- promote recognition and awareness of carers' rights and the diversity of carers
- address harmful gender stereotypes and reduce stigma associated with caring roles
- drive positive workplace cultures for carers
- aim to inform the public, and the services and industries that carers rely on, about carers’ needs and how to better support them
- include targeted information and strategies appropriate for First Nations and CALD communities.

Supported

The Australian Government is committed to building awareness and promoting the recognition of carers.

The Strategy is being widely promoted and used to raise the profile and recognition of unpaid carers in the community. Under the Action Plan Commitment 2, the Government aims to improve identification and recognition of carers. Commitment 2 includes the development and implementation of a robust communication plan to support carers.

The Government is committed to supporting diverse groups of carers in the community and provide the focused supports needed. This includes providing culturally appropriate services for First Nations carers, carers from CALD communities and the LGBTQIA+ caring community.