



CARERS RESOURCE KIT



About Southern Migrant & Refugee Centre (SMRC)

SMRC is a not-for-profit community-based organization that has been in operation since 1993. We provide services to migrants and refugees living in the southern region of Melbourne. Known for our understanding of diverse cultural groups and our advocacy to protect human rights, SMRC provides community-based services for migrants and refugees through in-language social, economic, and health and wellbeing programs.

Support for Carer's Program

The Support for Carers Program aims to achieve the highest level of service delivery.

The Support for Carers Program provides services for people who care for people with a disability, mental illness, or elderly people. Our program is designed to give carers the time and support they need to maintain their own wellbeing in addition to the person they are caring for.

The Support for Carers Program supports carers on a regular basis through weekly, fortnightly, or monthly programs and services. Respite services can be provided and include Flexible respite, domestic assistance, transport and personal care. Monthly workshops and seminars also provide a carer with the skills to manage daily interactions with their care-recipient.

Support for Carers program provides a safe and confidential place for carers.

The Aim

The aim of this Resource Kit is to help with the health and wellbeing needs of carers.

In this Resource Kit, carers will find practical and emotional support to help carers while caring for someone.

- Help carers and the people they care for to stay independent, healthy, and emotionally well.
- Give carers the tools and support they need to manage their caregiving duties and still have a life outside of caring.
- Make sure carers get the right support when and where they need it.
- Respect carers' choices about how much care they want to give

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Carers

Carers, regardless of their country of origin or cultural background, often face similar needs and challenges. Those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds may view caring for a family member or friend as a natural part of life, rather than a distinct role.

As a result, some may be hesitant to identify themselves as carers. The demands of caregiving can be exhausting and overwhelming, potentially leading to physical illness or mental health issues such as anxiety or depression. While caring can be a deeply fulfilling experience, without appropriate support, many carers from CALD backgrounds may experience emotional stress, strained relationships, financial difficulties, health concerns, and social isolation.



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Getting the help you need



Am I a carer?

Many people don't identify themselves as carers.

A carer is a person who provides unpaid care and support to a family member and friend who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail aged.

However, if you provide or arrange care for someone who cannot care for themselves, you are indeed a carer. As a carer, you may be entitled to assistance and support.

A carer could be a child, parent, sibling, grandparent, friend or neighbor.

Statistics

How many carers are in Australia?

There were

3 million carers representing 11.9%
of all Australians living in households

There were

1.2 million
primary carers
in Australia

and of these,

43.8%
had disability
themselves

12.8%

of all females were
carers, compared
with

11.1%
of all males

There were

391,300
young
carers

(under the age of 25)

Source: Palliative Care NSW from 2022 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

How many carers are in Victoria?

There are

703,000 carers in Victoria

Carers are of all
ages but are most
likely to be aged

55 - 64

9% of all

carers are under
the age of 25

15% of people
aged 75 years or
older are carers

70% of all
primary carers
are women

37.5% of primary carers are reliant on
a government pension or allowance as
their main source of income

Carers are diverse

Source: Carers Victoria



The Carers Recognition ACT 2012

The Carers Recognition ACT 2012 came into effect on 1 July 2012.

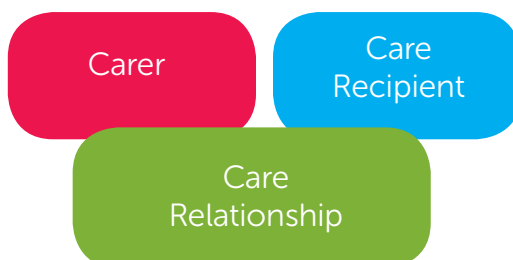
Victorian Charter

- Formally recognises and values the role of carers and the importance of care relationships in the Victorian community.

Supporting people in care relationships

- The Act does not apply to people employed to provide care services, or people who provide care as part of professional training or as a volunteer for an organisation.

By supporting the care relationship, between carer and care recipient, the carer and care recipient are healthier, more relaxed, more involved in decision making.



Services provided by the Support for Carers Program include:

- In-home respite & flexible respite
- Peer support meetings
- Emotional support
- Monthly meetings
- Monthly social outings
- Referrals to other organisations
- Advocating for our clients

In-home respite care and flexible respite care

In-home respite care and flexible respite care are both designed to provide temporary relief for carers allowing them to take a break while ensuring their loved ones continue to receive the care they need.

In-home respite care involves a professional support worker coming to the clients home to provide care. This allows the care recipient to stay in a familiar environment while the carer takes a break. Services can include personal care, meal preparation, and companionship.

Flexible respite care can be provided either in the home or in the community. It is designed to be adaptable to the needs of the carer and the care recipient.

Both types of respite care aim to support carer by giving them time to rest and recharge, which is crucial for their well-being and the quality of care they provide.

Peer Support Meetings

Peer support Meetings is a facilitated gathering where carers ,who provide care for someone with a disability, illness, or other needs, come together to share their experiences, challenges, and insights. These groups offer a supportive environment where carers can connect with others in similar situations, gain emotional support, and learn from each other's lived experiences. The goal is to reduce feelings of isolation and provide practical advice and encouragement.

Small Peer Support groups

Small Peer Support groups refers to a peer support group with a limited number of participants. These groups are typically more intimate, allowing for deeper connections and more personalized support among members. The small size nurtures a sense of trust and safety, enabling participants to share their experiences and challenges more openly. This format is particularly effective for providing emotional support, practical advice, and encouragement based on shared experiences.

Emotional support for carers

Emotional support for carers provides the necessary resources and assistance to help carers manage the emotional challenges associated with their caring roles.

Emotional support aims to enhance carers' resilience, improve their mental health, and ensure they can continue providing care.

Emotional support can be delivered one on one(face to face or via phone) and in a group setting.



Monthly meetings

Information sessions and webinars for carers are designed to equip carers with the skills and knowledge they need, to provide effective care. These sessions can cover a wide range of topics, including:

- Practical advice on personal care, mobility assistance, managing medications.
- Training on how to maintain a safe environment and handle emergencies.
- Strategies for managing stress and maintaining mental health.
- Education on specific conditions like dementia, mental health issues, Autism, chronic illnesses
- Information on legal rights, financial planning, and accessing support services.

These sessions are provided by professional staff and government agencies.

Monthly social outings provide an opportunity for carers to catch up over a coffee or a lunch or any other activity each month.

A carers outing refers to organised trips or activities specifically designed for carers and sometimes for the person they care for. These outings provide an opportunity for carers to take a break from their daily responsibilities, enjoy social interactions, and engage in recreational activities. Carers outings can include:

Day trips: Visits to parks, museums, restaurants or other local attractions.

Social activities: Group gatherings, such as picnics or community events.

Recreational activities: Participating in hobbies or fitness.

Our outings are fun, enjoyable, relaxing and reduce stress.

Monthly Monitoring

Monitoring carers' wellbeing involves regularly assessing their physical, emotional, and mental health, ensuring they receive the necessary support to continue their caring roles effectively.

Monitoring carers' wellbeing helps in identifying areas where additional support is needed and ensures that carers can sustain their carers roles without compromising their own health.

Wellbeing events

Wellbeing events for carers are organised activities and programs designed to support the physical, mental, and emotional health of carers. These events aim to provide carers with opportunities to be acknowledged (Carers week celebration), to connect with other carers, to gain valuable resources and information ("Getting to know you "- EXPO) and to relax (Tai Chi, mindfulness, and self-care. Learning new skills (art sessions, computer class)

These events are crucial in helping carers maintain their own wellbeing, reduce feelings of isolation, and enhance their ability to provide care.

Referrals to other organisations

We make referrals to other organisations to ensure carers receive the right support and services. This involves connecting carers with specialised agencies and community resources that can provide tailored assistance, such as respite care, counselling, financial aid, and health services. By collaborating with these organisations, we aim to address the diverse needs of our carers, helping them maintain their wellbeing and continue their vital roles effectively.

Advocating for our clients

Advocating for CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) clients involves ensuring that their unique cultural, linguistic, and social needs are met. This includes providing translation and interpretation services to facilitate effective communication, helping them navigate unfamiliar systems, and ensuring they have access to culturally appropriate resources and support. We work to address any barriers they may face due to language or cultural differences, promote their rights, and ensure they receive equitable treatment. By advocating for CALD clients, we aim to empower them, enhance their access to services, and improve their overall quality of life.



Working carers

Working carers are entitled to take up to one week of unpaid carer's leave every 12 months to care for a dependant who needs long-term care. This can include a spouse, partner, child, parent, or someone who relies on them for care, such as an elderly neighbour.

Your Rights at Work and Flexible Working Options

Employees have the right to request flexible working arrangements if they have been with their employer for at least 12 months and meet certain criteria, such as being a carer, having a disability, or being over 55.

Flexible working options can include:

Remote Work: Working from home or another location.

Flexible Hours: Adjusting start and finish times.

Compressed Workweeks: Working longer hours on fewer days.

Job Sharing: Splitting a full-time job with another employee.

Communicating Your Caring Role with Your Employer

It's important to communicate your caring responsibilities with your employer to ensure you receive the support you need. Here are some tips:

Prepare: Gather information about your situation and the support you need.

Schedule a Meeting: Find a convenient time for both you and your employer to discuss your needs.

Be Honest: Explain your caring responsibilities and how they impact your work.

Propose Solutions: Suggest flexible working arrangements or other adjustments that could help you balance work and caring role.

Carers Health and Wellbeing – Self Care

We asked our carers what they thought their main challenges might be as a carer.

The most reported challenge was the impact of caring for physical and mental health. Many carers told us they need more support to look after their health and wellbeing. They mentioned neglecting their own health due to their caring responsibilities. Carers are concerned about the future. Additionally, carers often feel lonely and find it difficult to get a good night's sleep. Many carers said they were too anxious to sleep, as they needed to attend to their loved one during the night.

Finding time to relax is crucial.

When you're caring for someone, it can be easy to put their needs before your own. However, taking a break is essential for both you and those for whom you care.

Whether it's meditation, seeing friends, or a trip away, finding some 'me' time to relax and unwind is important.

Respite

The Support for Carers Program offers you a short-term break. This can be:

- A schedule respite where a support worker takes care of the person you care for so you can have a break from your caring role.
- If you are unable to care for the person due to an unexpected situation, emergency respite can be arranged.
- Short-term residential respite or a holiday for the person you are looking after can be available.

You may prefer to organise respite yourself directly through our organisation by calling 9767 1909.

Employing a paid care worker (through SMRC - Diverse Care) to provide you a break at your own home. The Diverse Care Worker role provides culturally appropriate support to elderly people and people with disability. Role responsibilities include but are not limited to monitoring and communicating client condition, domestic cleaning, personal hygiene activities and tasks, provision of respite services, transport to appointments and activities, provision of meals and other health and wellness related activities as relevant to each client.

Talk to your GP

Talking to your GP about how you're feeling is an important step in managing your health and well-being.

GPs are trained to understand a wide range of health issues, including the physical and emotional challenges faced by carers.

They can provide advice and support based on your specific situation.

GPs can connect you with local support services, counselling, and other resources that can help you manage your carers responsibilities.

Your GP can assist you with applying for carers payment, carers allowance, half price taxi card (all subject on the individual's situation.)



Support available to carers

There are many organisations that can provide supports, services, and payments for the person you care for. Below is a list of organisations to see what payments and services are available. Interpreter in your language is available upon your request.



Carer's Victoria is the statewide voice for family carers, representing and providing support to carers in Victoria. Carers Victoria have information and resources for culturally and linguistically diverse carers and those assisting them. Carers Victoria supports carers from a range of multicultural backgrounds and has fact sheets and information in 15 community languages.

You can download fact sheets or request copies by telephoning the Carer Line on **1800 242 636** (free call except from mobiles).

www.carersvictoria.org.au



Carer Gateway: If you become sick or injured and can't continue to care, Carer Gateway can help to organize emergency respite services to take over while you recover, if a suitable service is available in your local area. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Phone number: **1800 422 737** www.carergateway.gov.au



My Aged Care is the starting point for older people, their families, and carers to find information about government-funded aged care services and how to access them.

Phone number: **1800 200 422** www.myagedcare.gov.au



National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides funding to eligible people with disability to have greater participation in the community and the economy.

Phone number: **1800 800 110** www.ndis.gov.au



Disability Gateway has information and services to help all Australians with disability, their family, friends, and carers to find the support they need.

Phone number: **1800 643 787** www.disabilitygateway.gov.au



Dementia Australia is the national peak body supporting people living with dementia, their families and carers.

Phone number: **1800 699 799** www.dementia.org.au



Ambulance Victoria aims to improve the health of the community by providing high quality pre-hospital care and medical transport. AV provides emergency medical response.

If you require an emergency ambulance call 000.



Language Loop Interpreting and Translating services

Phone number: **9280 1941**



The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)

Phone number: **13 14 50**

Telephone interpreting

Translations On-site interpreting



Services Australia delivers government payments and services. Their programs include Medicare, Centrelink, and Child Support.

www.servicesaustralia.gov.au

Carer's Allowance, this fortnightly payment is for you if you give support and care to someone either with disability, a medical condition or who's frail aged.

Phone number: **132 717** www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/carers-payment

Carers Payment might qualify for financial support if you are providing care, particularly if you have had to stop working or reduce your work hours to do so.

Phone number: **132 717** www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/carers-payment

Support for those who are disabled, ill, or injured

Phone number: **132 717**

www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/disability-support-pension

Support for carers who are of pension age

Phone number: **132 300** www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/age-pension



Victorian Carer Card provides discounts and benefits to carers in acknowledgement of this contribution.

Phone number: **1800 901 958** www.carercard.vic.gov.au



Half price Taxi Card supports people with limited mobility by offering subsidised taxi fares.

Phone number: **1800 638 802**

www.vic.gov.au/multi-purpose-taxi-program



Companion Card allows people with disability to bring a support person to events and activities without paying for a second ticket.

Phone number: **1800 650 611** www.companioncard.vic.gov.au

A woman with glasses and a red lanyard stands under a large umbrella with red and white horizontal stripes. She is wearing a white short-sleeved top and a grey skirt. The background is a plain, light grey wall.

Self-Care
for Carers

Self-care is not a luxury – it's a necessity

Healing Boxes.com

Carers Stories

The below stories and testimonials have been shared by clients of the Support for Carers Program. We thank them for sharing their experiences with us to continuously improve our services.

F.S.

I came from Afghanistan, looking for a better life and better future for me and my son. My son used to care for me, I have chronic back ache, and arthritis. We lived together, and he helped me with daily things, until one day my son had a stroke, and I needed to care for him.

Unfortunately, the stroke effected his speech and his movement, and I had hard time adjusting to his care needs, and going to medical appointments and rehab, I didn't know Support for Carer program existed, but when I joined, I was able to communicate my needs, get the support needed for me and my son.

I enjoyed time away when I attended the retreat for carer, I have enjoyed meeting other carers in the program, the program supports me mentally and emotionally, I was able to look after myself and my son.

D.S.

I am a carer for my daughter who lives with Autism. I felt the world is collapsing around me when I heard the diagnosed, I was in denial, and at the beginning waiting for my daughter to get better.

Support for carer program, supported me in the journey. I join the meetings and the outings, just to get a break from my caring role and I met other carers in the programs specially the ones who care for the Children living with Autism, we share information, ideas and support each other.

I know this is lifelong journey, but Support for carers program will support me and my family through it.

M.S.

I am a carer for my son, I came with my special need son to Australia 2 years ago to visit my daughter, but one day my son had an epilepsy episode, and it lasted long time, I was worried and called the ambulance. My son was better, but I was amazed and surprised for the care he received, I decided to stay and apply for permanent resident.

I join support for carer program, and I felt doors are opening for me. I learned how to care for myself to be able to care for my son, I met other carers even though I am still learning English I felt we connect by caring for our loved once. They supported me emotionally and mentally. I am in a better place now and the future looks brighter and promising for my son. He attends special school and he's happy and content.

I develop friendship through Support for Carer program, looking forward to being a permanent resident.



A.P.

I look after my mother and going on the retreat, made me realise that I was starving in a sense, starving to find myself. I really enjoyed the games; the walk and I had fun meeting other carers. After the retreat, I spoke to people I met on my street and had conversations...something I never used to do before. The retreat had a positive impact on me and helped me to think about things differently. I feel like a little bit of me came back. I do feel anxious when my mother is unwell. She was unwell recently and I was so busy with follow ups, appointments and forgot about self-care. The retreat helped me, and I am happy to have attended it. Thank you.

D.F.

"I would like to thank your Team for organising guest speaker from Centrelink – Services Australia for coming out to SMRC. I found the information very informative and relatable to me personally. Guest speaker was able to answer my questions, the ones that she couldn't answer, she referred me to the website and showed me where to make an appointment – either by phone, zoom or in person. This is an easier way than ringing Centrelink and waiting for your call to be attended to. Thanks again for organising this."

Testimonials

F.S. "Such a great program helped me to accept things and empowered me to make decisions."

T.L. "I want to thank you for making time to see me. It was very therapeutic for me to speak about some of the issues I face while caring for my wife. I left feeling a lot better and understood."

F.H. "They genuinely care and are helpful to us and the community. They always have a smile and a positive attitude. They always ask us how we are physically and mentally. We appreciate everything they do for us. Very happy with the services we have been receiving from them. Highly recommend!"

E.A. "Carers need a break, and my break is when I join your meetings."

J.R. "The Support for Carers program helped me understand that self-care IS important. I feel cared for and listened to. I am very grateful for the outings and retreat I attended. I feel reenergised. I am happy to meet other carers too!"

S.K. "Thank you so much for the wonderful outing we had yesterday. Doing the utmost to make us carers feel cared and loved. I am so impressed; it is highly commendable."

S.F. "Thank you for organising the respite for my husband last Wednesday. The worker was very good and had taken good care of my husband. He is also Sri Lankan, and they had lots to talk about. They enjoyed a cup of Sri Lankan tea before the worker left. Thank you again for the lovely carers lunch I was able to go to and for organising respite for me."

M.S. "Looking forward to your outings, that is my selfcare and my relaxing time!"

Support for Carers Program welcome your Feedback

The Support for Carers Program is designed to provide assistance and resources to carers and your feedback is very important in helping us to improve the program.

For more information, please call Southern Migrant & Refugee Centre on **9767 1900**.
Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

You can also visit the SMRC website www.smrc.org.au

If you need to talk to someone in a language other than English, please let our reception know and we will call you back with an interpreter.

All the information in this Resource Kit was created with carers needs in mind.
It was developed with input of experienced staff.



Southern
Migrant & Refugee Centre

39 Clow St, Dandenong VIC 3175
P 9767 1900

E smrc@smrc.org.au

www.smrc.org.au