

VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORTING CARERS RESOURCE GUIDE 2022

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The MAV is the statutory peak body for local government in Victoria. While this document aims to broadly reflect the activities of local government, it does not purport to reflect the breadth of views of individual councils across the state.

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INTRODUCTION

It is estimated there are over 700,000 carers living in Victorian communities. A wide range of organisations and bodies provide varying levels of support to carers, from government agencies, medical practitioners to volunteer organisations.

Carers are also supported by Victorian councils through a range of initiatives including support programs, providing spaces to meet as well as directly supporting the work of Neighbourhood Houses and carers groups. Some councils have established policies to guide the support provided to staff members who have carer responsibilities and to guide their support to carers and carers groups in the community.

This guide has been designed to assist Victorian councils in supporting carers, showcasing the broad range of policies and activities that councils have established to achieve this. It can be used to generate discussion within council around future directions in supporting carers.

REASONS FOR COUNCILS TO SUPPORT CARERS IN THEIR COMMUNITY

Eleven per cent of Victorians have an unpaid caring role, around 1 in 9 people across the state. Carers can be found across a wide range of ages with some carers aged under 10 and others in their 90's. Carers come from all walks of life; they can be family members, friends or neighbours.

Carers provide much needed assistance and emotional support to the people they care for providing help with physical tasks, healthcare (administering medication and managing appointments), education, recreation, transport and property maintenance. They also provide emotional, social and communication support. It is estimated that the annual cost of replacing the support provided by Victorian carers is around \$15 billion.

The caring role is rewarding but is also complex and challenging; carers therefore require their own support. In supporting carers, councils can assist a significant number of local residents who need support within the realm of their legislated responsibilities. It also links with existing access, equity and inclusion plans of many councils.

COUNCILS SUPPORTING CARERS

A recent MAV survey of Victorian local government found that many councils undertake a range of activities to support carers in their community including respite, exercise programs, National Carers Week events, support groups and other activities.

Councils also support carers through the use of companion and carer cards with a range of discounts made available at council facilities and events.

Councils can have easily accessible information for carers on their websites, generally made available as links to external organisations and supports.

Many of the programs or activities provided by councils to support carers are through Home and Community Care (HACC) and HACCPYP (Program for Young People) respite services.

Click [here](#) to read the report.

Councils can get in touch with Carers Victoria if they require any assistance with carer support activities or programs.

WAYS COUNCILS CAN SUPPORT THEIR CARERS LOCALLY

The following sections detail how councils can support carers in their municipality. The supports range in resource intensity and are illustrated with examples of activities that councils are currently, or have previously, provided for carers in their communities.

1. Supporting Staff With Care Responsibilities

As an employer, Councils have a number of obligations to support carers as outlined in the *Carer's Recognition Act 2012*.

Carer Recognition Act 2012

The *Carers Recognition Act 2012* (the Act) formally recognises and values the role of carers and the importance of care relationships in the Victorian community. It came into effect on 1 July 2012.

Overseen by the Department of Family, Fairness and Housing the Act has been developed to recognise, promote, and value the role of people in care relationships; recognise the different needs of persons in care relationships; support and recognise that care relationships bring benefits to people in care relationships and to the community; and enact care relationship principles to promote understanding of the significance of care relationships.

The Act has implications for council departments providing support or services to people being cared for or providing care; human resources managers responsible for staff training; managers of council services or facilities where council staff might interact with people being cared for and their carers.

Local government has obligations under the Act. These include:

- Understanding and implementing the Care Relationship Principles outlined in Part 2 of the Act
- Meeting the obligations outlined in Part 3 of the Act
- Preparation of a report on compliance with the obligations in the Act to be included in council's annual report.

Examples of activities that can be included in a council annual report (regardless of whether council undertakes direct service delivery or not):

- Reflecting responsibilities in workplace agreements and other arrangements
- Any information on carers/caring relationships provided as part of induction/training
- Providing information on caring relationships to staff and volunteers who have roles within the general community
- Referring community members to service providers, such as Carer Gateway or Carers Victoria
- Ensuring equitable access to facilities and events
- Any specific activities delivered for carers in that financial year

See examples from council annual reports over page.

Moonee Valley Annual Report 2020-21

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Carer's Recognition

As a care support organisation, Council must report annually on its obligation under section 11 of the *Carers Recognitions Act 2012*. All practical measures have been taken to ensure our staff, agents and volunteers are informed about the principles and obligations of the carer's legislation.

Council provided information on the care relationship in induction and training programs for staff working in aged care and disability support services, staff working in frontline positions with the general community and volunteers working directly with the community.

Council has taken all practicable measures to comply with its responsibilities and has promoted the principles of carers recognition to people in care relationships who receive our services, to people in care relationships and to the wider community by referring carers to services from point of assessment, providing services to carers, reflecting carers in all relevant staff position descriptions, reflecting carers in service guides and brochures, and ensuring access to facilities (for example, neighbourhood centres) includes carers as a core target group.

In 2020-21 Aged and Disability Service has continued its commitment towards supporting local carers across the lifespan and delivering supports which enhance their wellbeing.

Key initiatives included:

- Weekly Carers Exercise programs which include Chair Yoga, Meditation Relax-ercising and Pilates, Strength training and Yoga
- Active Pathways monthly walk followed by brunch at The Boathouse
- Monthly Social Club
- Delivery of innovative community-based respite program such as the The Lab Program in library venues.
- Monthly Newsletter – to inform of upcoming events and existing programs, may feature a story from a carer's perspective
- Thank You Event to celebrate Carers during Carers week in October 2020.
- Partnership with Dementia Australia to deliver a series of online workshops for carers:
 - o Worried about your memory
 - o Dementia and You
 - o Coping with Changed behaviours
- Dementia Action Week Awareness Campaign which includes Mayor recorded speech and online movie screening of Mr Velvet Ears



Glenelg Shire 2021 Annual Report

Council is committed to the Carers Recognition Act 2012 and seeks to support and acknowledge the important role of carers and their families, through the ongoing provision of services of respite and social support programs. Council has provided further support for people in care relationships through a piloted Dementia Support Group, in response to an identified gap in the community. This program seeks to further support carers social wellbeing and health by providing support to those in our community with dementia and provide respite for their carers and linking carers to additional support services and networks and workshops

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City of Boroondara 2020-21 Annual Report



Carers recognition

Council has taken all practicable measures to comply with its responsibilities described in the Carers Recognition Act 2012 by:

- promoting the principles of the Act to people (and families) in a caring relationship
- informing staff of the requirements of the Act at staff meetings
- defining the carer role and relationship to all staff including Home Support Staff
- undertaking necessary changes to the Assessment, Care Planning and Review process to involve carers and seek their specific feedback through Council surveys
- reviewing all necessary policies and practice instructions to include the recognition of the carer and the care relationship
- where required, collecting individual information about the carers to meet their own needs
- ensuring that intake and information about services is delivered in a timely manner, taking carer stress and fatigue into account, when looking at priority of access to services
- recognising the special knowledge that carers have of the person in their care.

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South Gippsland Shire Council 2019-2020 Annual Report

CARERS RECOGNITION

In accordance with the Carers Recognition Act 2012, Council is required to report annually on its care measurement obligations under section 11 of the Act.

Council has promoted the principles of the Act to people in care relationships who receive Council services and to the wider community by:

- Distributing printed material through relevant Council services;
- Providing information to organisations represented in Council/community networks.

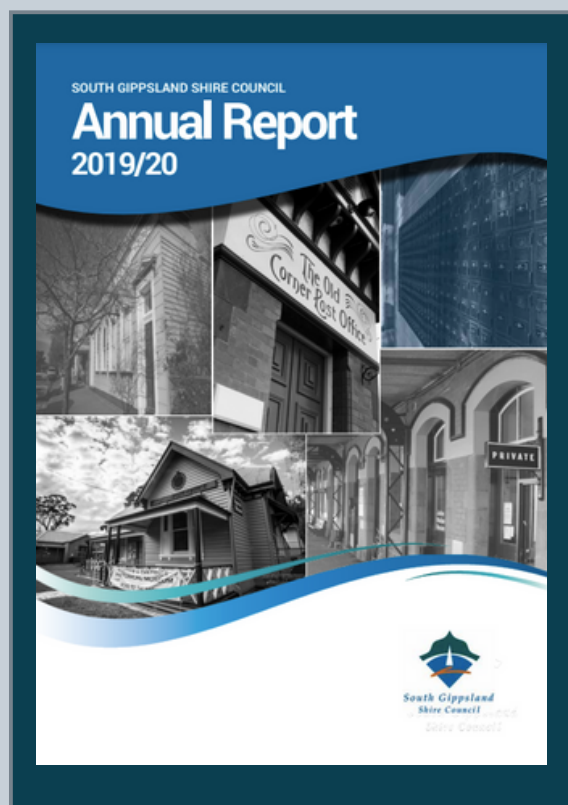
Council has taken all practicable measures to ensure staff, Council agents and volunteers working for Council are informed about the principles and obligations of the Act by including information on the care relationship in:

- Council induction and training programs for staff working in Regional Assessment Service, Community Services and front-line positions with the general community; and
- Induction and training programs for volunteers working directly with the community.

Council has taken all practicable measures to review and modify policies, procedures and supports to include recognition of the carer relationship and has provided the following additional activities and resources to recognise the care relationship.

The Intake and Assessment Team continue to work with carers and recognise the significant role they play in supporting loved ones. With consent, carers are supported to link in with services and supports that may be helpful to assist them with the important role they do and to look after their own health and wellbeing

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Mildura Rural City Council Annual Report 2020-2021

Carers' Recognition

In accordance with the Carers Recognition Act 2012, Council is required to report annually on its care measurement obligations under Section 11 of that Act. We have taken all practicable measures to comply with our responsibilities as outlined in the Carers Recognition Act 2012. We have also promoted the principles of the Act to people in care relationships who receive our services, to other people in care relationships and to the wider community by:

- Distributing printed material through relevant Council services
- Providing information to clients and their carers on the Carer Gateway at the time of assessment
- Providing information to organisations represented in Council/community networks (eg Aged Care Advisory Network Group)
- Working in partnership with the Sunraysia Carers' Group on community projects
- Providing online workshops to assist parents of children with disabilities to understand how they can support their children's mental health
- Providing support to people with a disability and their carers within the community through workshops and online forums regarding the National Disability Insurance Agency and mental health
- Working in partnership with the local representative of Carer Support Services (Mildura) to implement local services
- Working in partnership with local providers to develop the Pathways for Carers walk program for carers
- Working in partnership with the local Dementia Australia Service (Mildura) on community projects
- Working in partnership with the Mildura and District Aboriginal Service to provide community services
- Promoting online (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) Seniors' Festival programs aimed at clients and their carers
- Participating in local community events with a carer focus
- Promoting and celebrating National Carers' Week

We have taken all practicable measures to ensure staff, Council agents and volunteers working for Council are informed about the principles and obligations of the Act by including information on the care relationship in:

- Council induction and training programs for staff working in Aged and Disability Services and frontline positions with the general community



Mildura Rural City Council Annual Report 2020-2021

We have taken all practicable measures to review and modify policies, procedures and supports to include recognition of the carer relationship and provided the following additional activities and resources to recognise the care relationship:

- Flexible respite services for carers • Flexible service delivery and increased support for clients and carers during the COVID19 pandemic
- Carers Support Services (Mildura) provided with information regarding the Community Relief Program and supports for carers during COVID-19 pandemic
- Implementation of the use of the Carers' Gateway to support carers to access appropriate services • An assessment service that is inclusive of the care recipient and carer's needs
- Review of services to meet the changing needs of the care recipient and carer, as set out in the Quality Aged Care Standards
- Support for carers to link in with the local area coordination team regarding National Disability Insurance Scheme eligibility
- Referral of people with a disability and their carers to appropriate agencies for support
- Linking people through referral processes into: Mildura Rural City Council Annual Report 2020-2021 | 120
- Carer support groups o Dementia Australia
- Mildura and District Aboriginal Services
- Rights Information and Advocacy Centre and Access Support Services
- Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council
- Palliative Care Service.
- Development and implementation of individual care plans to meet the care recipient and carer's needs
- Provision of resources regarding support for carers
- Development of an Annual Calendar, and Young at Heart community newsletter to promote carers support services, Carers' Gateway and National Carers' Week.

Gannawarra Shire Council Annual Report 2020-2021

Carer's Recognition

In accordance with the Carers Recognition Act 2012, Council is required to report annually on its care measurement obligations under Section 11 of that Act. Council has taken all practicable measures to comply with its responsibilities outlined in the Carers Recognition Act 2012. Council has promoted the principles of that Act to people in care relationships who receive Council services, to people in care relationships, and to the wider community by: Facilitating a monthly Carer's Group; Distributing information through Council services and community newsletters; and Working in partnership with other organisations and community groups. Council has taken all practicable measures to review and modify policies, procedures and supports to include recognition of the carer relationship and has provided the following additional activities and resources to recognise the care relationship: Recognising National Carer's Week; Providing respite services to carers.



Supporting Staff With Care Responsibilities

National Employment Standards

Personal carers leave for local government employees is outlined in the National Employment Standards (NES). Carers leave is important as care recipient health fluctuates meaning a carer has to be able to respond and adapt to these circumstances, as a result they may need unplanned leave for care recipient hospital admission and other healthcare. All 79 Victorian council Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBAs) include leave entitlements in line with the NES. These generally apply to immediate family and household members.

Some councils extend this to include significant other persons. Family Violence clauses can also allow for carers leave to support a person who is experiencing family violence.

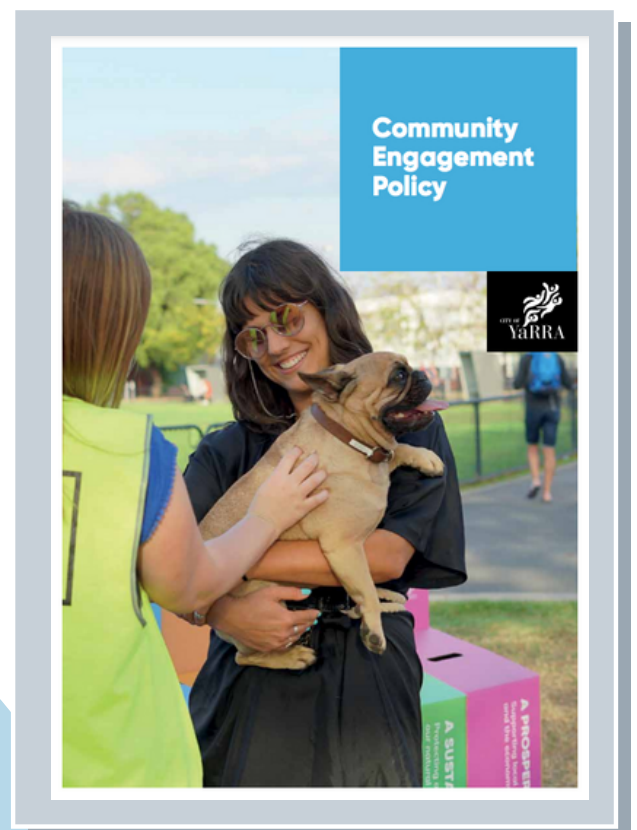
Local Government Act 2020

The Local Government Act includes provisions to support Councillors who have a caring role, including leave and other entitlements. The Local Government Act sets out the responsibility for each council to develop a Community Engagement Policy and councils may wish to identify carers as a community stakeholder group as part of this policy.

Example:

Yarra City Council's [Community Engagement Policy 2020](#) identifies carers as a community stakeholder. It also provides details as to the number of people with unpaid caring responsibilities in the municipality. See pages 9 and 16.

In Yarra, 14.8% of the population has a disability and 7.2% of the Yarra population are unpaid carers assisting their family members. This totals 21% of Yarra's population – a large proportion of our community that face challenges to actively participate in community life.



Training

Councils interact with carers on a daily basis through their roles as an employer and as customer facing organisations and community program provider. Targeted training for local government can help councils and their staff to better support carers in their organisation and communities. The following case study is one example of how a council may go about increasing staff understanding of carers and responsibilities under the Carers Recognition Act 2012.

Port Philip City Council - Carers Recognition Act and Council Training

Background

In 2021 Port Phillip Council partnered with Carers Victoria to develop a pilot training program for council officers to increase their understanding of the unique carer experience and how their role might respond to the care relationship principles of the Carers Recognition Act 2012 (the Act). Following this training council officers who participated recognised opportunities and commenced implementation to improve Council's response to their carers as customers.

Drivers

The changing aged and disability service delivery environment made council consider how it would engage with carers in the future. Council's annual reporting on the Carers Recognition Act 2012 had focused on service delivery. How would the organisation respond to the Act now that service delivery was no longer the primary channel for council engaging with its carers? Council undertook a review and developed a series of actions to help increase awareness of the Act and its relationship with council roles.

How they got started

- **Organisation wide review:** Council assigned an officer to undertake an organisation wide review of understanding of the Carers Recognition Act and its obligations for council. Through this it became apparent that knowledge and understanding of the Act and its relationship to the organisation was mixed. The service delivery side of the council was very aware of it, this was not necessarily the case across the rest of the organisation.
- **Benchmarking:** Council undertook a desktop review of council annual reports to see how other councils reported on the Act and what activities they were undertaking to support carers in their municipality.

Port Philip City Council - Carers Recognition Act and Council Training

- **Developed Recommendations for Council Consideration;** based on the organisation review and benchmarking exercises three recommendations were developed for consideration of council, they included:
- Creation of an online Information Hub including information on what council does and how it responds to cares; the council resources relevant to carers (inc council and local carer supports either in Port Phillip or neighbouring suburbs); a call to action (inviting other groups to become involved in the web space); events for carers; and resources external to council (eg statewide or national resources). The content of this Hub was reviewed and enhanced by carers groups who had a relationship with council.
- Organisational involvement in providing content for the annual report: seeking greater input across the organisation for annual report content, coordinated by a nominated officer.
- Capacity building: to start working on the capacity or the capability of council offices around their knowledge of this legislation.

These recommendations were accepted by council.

Developing the Local Government Specific Training

The first two recommendations were easy to implement. Capacity building posed more of a challenge. After consulting with local government colleagues it became apparent there was no local government specific training available. The council officer reached out to Carers Victoria to help develop a local government specific training package.

Port Phillip and Carers Victoria worked together to develop a pilot local government specific training program. The package had to acknowledge that carers recognition is a minor part of some roles, that buy in from all staff may be difficult if it wasn't well tailored. What was developed was a one-hour training package relevant to council staff and operations.

Delivering the Pilot

The officer worked with council's learning and development team to get the pilot into council's learning and events program. The net was cast wide and registrations were monitored, with identified gaps targeted to ensure broad representation in the pilot.

Ten officers from across the organization participated in the pilot. Materials were sent to a further three officers following the training.

Once the training was complete the officer followed up with all participants to get feedback on the training and what impact it has had on their role in council.

Port Philip City Council - Carers Recognition Act and Council Training

Resources

Compiling information for the annual report took the officer around three hours. Emails were sent to relevant managers in early April seeking information on specific activities relevant to carers. Then the content was compiled in mid-June.

The amount of time spent reviewing the organisation was around three hours.

The mapping exercise also took around three hours. This would vary depending on the level of understanding of your organisation.

The steps involved in this exercise included:

- Looking at how the legislation applies to different work areas
- Identifying the people you need to engage with
- Developing key messages/talking points for engaging with them
- And identifying the best method for engagement. Is it email, phone conversation, in person meetings or a mixture of both?

The training was delivered by Carers Victoria at a nominated rate, because it was a pilot program. The training took around one and a half hours of officer time.

Benefits

The training program improved organisation wide understanding of carers, identified ways to provide positive interactions with carers and councils obligations under the Carers Recognition Act.

Lessons Learned

Getting organisation wide buy-in can be challenging. It is easy to get buy in from areas that have service delivery or community focused roles to see the relevance of this training for them.

It can be harder for internally focused areas of council to see the relevance for their role. Highlighting the responsibilities of council to staff who have a caring role is an effective way to get their participation.

Having a champion to advocate for the importance of supporting carers as an organisation is crucial.

And be persistent in your advocacy. You may not get traction on the first attempt. But persistence and tailoring key messages can win out in the end.

Policies

Council policies, strategies and plans provide a platform to embed recognition of carers into council programs and activities. An MAV desktop review in 2021 found that three-quarters of Victorian councils (59 councils) have at least one strategy plan or policy that mentioned support for carers. Most of these were found in disability access/inclusion policies with some councils integrating carers and carer responsibilities into broader council plans to better reflect the diversity of caring roles. Integration is important as not all carers, or the person they care for, are alike eg, they may be looking after a person with a disability, an older person, a person with mental health concerns or experiencing family violence, Integration recognises these interconnections.

Melton

A City for all People (2017-2021) is an integrated plan that combines four individual Council strategies, specifically the Disability Action Plan (recognising disability can be present at any age), the Municipal Early Years Plan (0-12 years), Youth Strategy (12-25 years), and the Ageing Well Strategy (50+ years) into one, all encompassing document.

This is the first time these documents have been combined and in doing so, Council formally recognises the interconnection between all ages and life stages, and the continuum in which our community live their lives—from child to parent, worker, carer to retiree.

A revised strategy, Melton: A Strategy for All Abilities and All Ages, will be released in 2022.



Representation

Councils have a range of advisory and reference groups established to provide advice on a council on key policy areas. Councils should consider having carers represented on these groups to ensure their needs, and those of the person they care for, are considered in decision making processes.



Bayside

Bayside Access and Inclusion Advisory Group

In 2021 Bayside City Council appointed 10 community members to its new Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee (DAIAC) from an impressive field of 30 applications. Applicants were people with lived experience of disability either as a person with a disability, or a carer/support person for someone with a disability.

The Committee assists Council in addressing the barriers that prevent people from accessing, participating and being included in the day-to-day activities that many take for granted.

The first priority of the Committee was to help shape council's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 (MPHWP) from the perspective of people with lived experience of disability. The MPHWP includes Council's Disability Action Plan.

Representation

Wangaratta

Wangaratta City Council: Wangaratta Accessibility Reference Group

The Wangaratta Accessibility Reference Group (WARG) is a group of passionate community members living with disability, their families, carers and people who work in the disability sector. The group aims to:

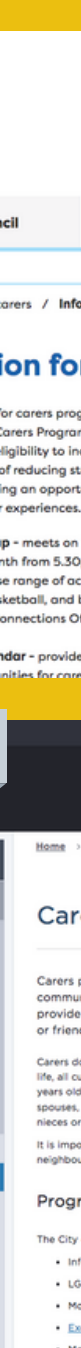
- Support communication between the Council and the local community on disability access issues.
- Provide feedback and recommendations to Council regarding disability access issues raised
- Identify projects that will improve access and inclusion

2. INFORMATION PROVISION TO THE COMMUNITY

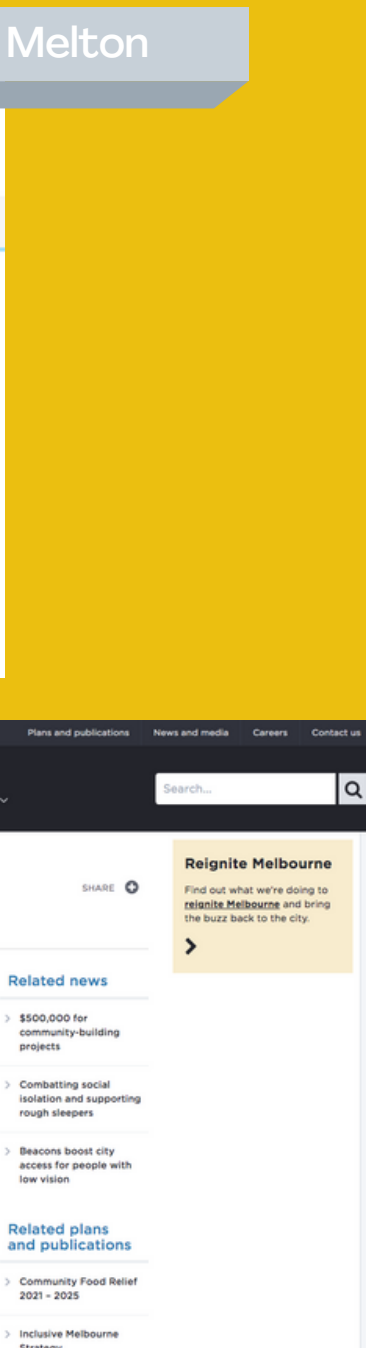
A dedicated page on council's website could be the first place carers go to to seek support and information in their local area. Many councils have information for carers located on their aged and disability or positive ageing web pages. However, as carers come from a wide range of ages and backgrounds, and care for a diverse age-range of people, having information only on the council's ageing or disability pages could be a barrier to carers accessing information. A dedicated carers web page would overcome this barrier and be more inclusive of all carers in the community.

The web page could be simple, providing information on national and state supports, or could be more tailored to the local area, providing national and state information as well as regional and local supports provided by council and other agencies.

Melton



Melbourne



POSSIBLE ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON A SIMPLE WEBPAGE

INTRODUCTION (could include some of the following points)

- Carers play a special role in our community providing much needed assistance and emotional support to the people they care for.
- A carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to family members and friends with a disability, mental illness, chronic health issue or age-related condition.
- Carers can be found across a wide range of ages with some carers aged under 10 and others are in their 90's. Carers come from all walks of life; they can be family members, friends or neighbours.
- Eleven per cent of Victorians have an unpaid caring role, around 1 in 9 people across the state. In [insert council name] that equates to around [insert number based on council population] - or add in specific numbers if known.
- [insert council name] values the contribution of carers in our municipality. The following are links to resources that may be helpful for carers (note: the organisations below are not necessarily endorsed or affiliated with council).

[Carer Gateway](#) – practical advice and resources for carers

[Carers Victoria](#) - the state-wide voice for family carers, representing and providing support to carers in Victoria. Their website includes details of local carer support groups, resources and events. Carers Victoria also has a statewide advisory line to assist carers with navigating the resources and supports available

[Young Carers Network](#) - a place for young carers to learn about support services, access resources and share their story and opinions.

[Satellite Foundation](#) - for children and young people where a parent has a mental illness or mental health challenge

[Tandem](#) - peak body representing family and friends of people living with mental illness

[Dementia Support Australia](#) - nationwide service whose role is to improve the quality of life for people living with dementia and their carers.

[My Aged Care](#) – resources for people caring for an older person

[Disability Gateway](#) - information and services to help people with disability, their family, friends and carers

[Palliative Care Australia](#) - resources and access to support for people carer for someone at end of life

[CALD Carers](#) – Carers Australia has links to supports for culturally and linguistically diverse carers

[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers](#) – contact Carers Victoria for direction to localised supports

[Carers Week](#) – has information on events, resources for carers and people who interact with carers

[Carer Card](#) – state-wide discounts and benefits with participating businesses

Council may wish to have a more tailored webpage for carers reflecting local services and supports delivered by council. This could be called a "Carers Information Hub".

POSSIBLE ITEMS FOR A "CARERS INFORMATION HUB"

In addition to the information on the previous page a "Carers Information Hub" would include more localised information, such as:

COUNCIL RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

Links to policies (eg aged, disability and inclusion, early years, council plan)

Links to programs (support groups, discounts/rebates)

Links to events

LOCAL SUPPORTS

Links to Allied Health

Links to Neighbourhood House

Links to local support groups

Consider having an option to submit a local group/activity for inclusion on the page

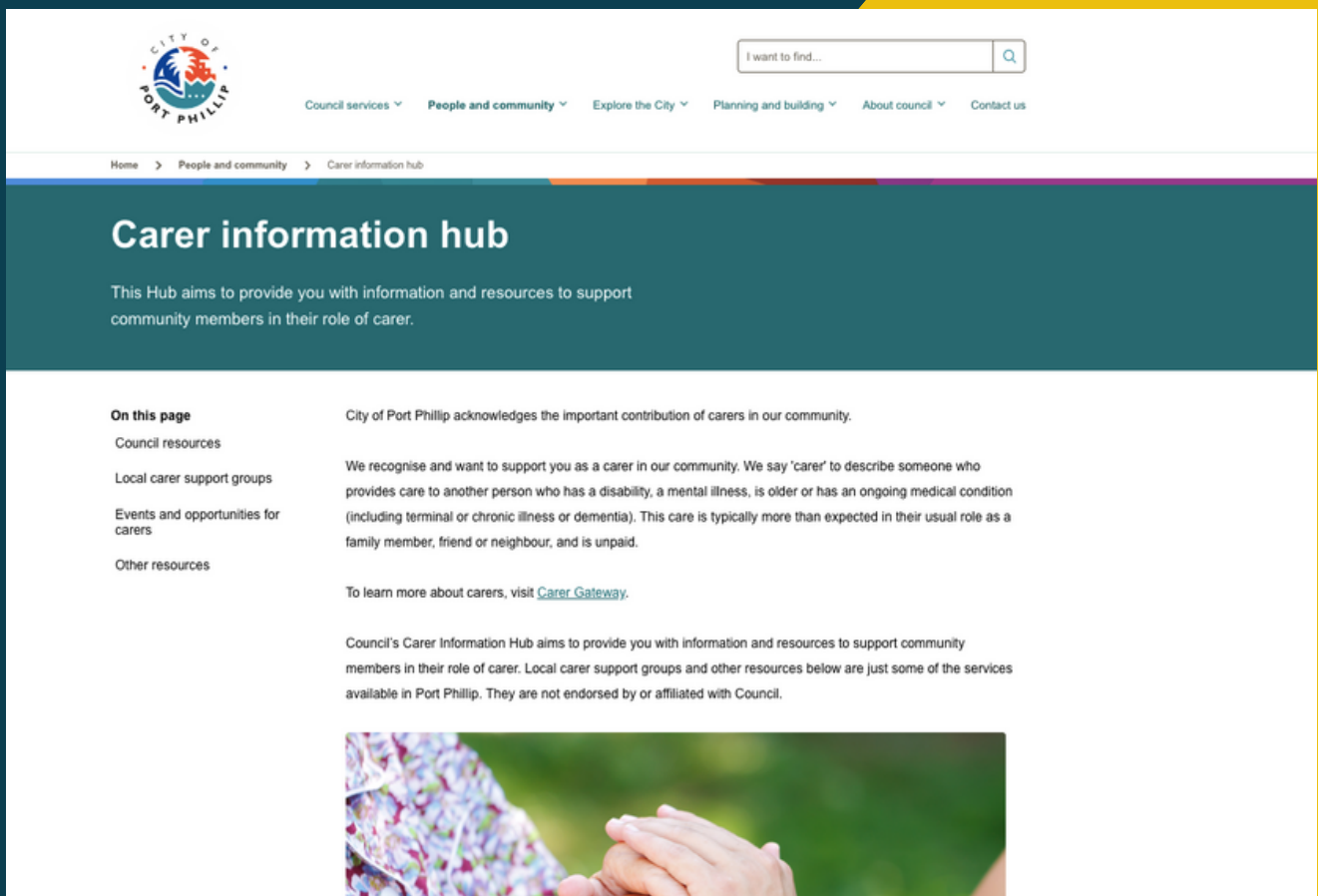
CONTACT

You may wish to have a Contact Us button that goes to a dedicated officer/s or team within council.

PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL – CARERS INFORMATION HUB

The [Port Phillip Carer Information Hub](#) provides carers with an online resource containing information on supports available in the local community. This webpage includes links to relevant council resources such as aged care and disability services, a disability access map, rebates and upcoming events available. It also includes links to local carer support groups, and an avenue for other carer support groups to be included on the Hub. As well as statewide and national resources and information.

The Hub was created in response to recommendations made to management following the 2019/2020 annual report, which identified gaps in service delivery. Information on the Hub is maintained by the Disability and Inclusion Officer.



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the City of Port Phillip website. It includes the City of Port Phillip logo, a search bar with the placeholder text "I want to find...", and a menu with the following items: Council services, People and community, Explore the City, Planning and building, About council, and Contact us. Below the navigation bar, the breadcrumb trail reads: Home > People and community > Carer information hub. The main heading is "Carer information hub". The introductory text states: "This Hub aims to provide you with information and resources to support community members in their role of carer." On the left side, there is a section titled "On this page" with a list of links: Council resources, Local carer support groups, Events and opportunities for carers, and Other resources. The main content area contains the following text: "City of Port Phillip acknowledges the important contribution of carers in our community. We recognise and want to support you as a carer in our community. We say 'carer' to describe someone who provides care to another person who has a disability, a mental illness, is older or has an ongoing medical condition (including terminal or chronic illness or dementia). This care is typically more than expected in their usual role as a family member, friend or neighbour, and is unpaid. To learn more about carers, visit [Carer Gateway](#). Council's Carer Information Hub aims to provide you with information and resources to support community members in their role of carer. Local carer support groups and other resources below are just some of the services available in Port Phillip. They are not endorsed by or affiliated with Council." Below the text is a photograph of two hands clasped together, one belonging to an older person with a patterned sleeve and the other to a younger person.

In addition to a webpage or Hub councils could look at other avenues for sharing information with carers, like expos, detailed brochures/guides and newsletters (physical copies or online).

MELTON CITY COUNCIL - CARE MELTON EXPO



The Annual Care Melton Expo is delivered during Carer's Week. This event provides an opportunity for exhibitors to provide information on support, services or resources to carers, people with a disability or older people. It includes free entry and serves to recognise and celebrate carers within their community, increasing public awareness of the valuable role carers play and the issues that affect them. The expo moved online in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 Chief Health Officer Directions.

You can view the expo [here](#).

Knox City Council's Children, Family and Community Services Team has developed a 160 page information booklet on all the disability and aged services in the municipality. This includes specific information and supports for carers.

The Knox Guide to Disability and Aged Care has helped carers save valuable time and better understand the support available to them and the person they are caring for. As one carer said, "It makes things much easier being able to just pick up one book to find out what local services are out there for carers, rather than scroll through numerous websites. There are so many services and activities that I just didn't realise that we could tap into."

Read the booklet [here](#).

KNOX CITY COUNCIL - GUIDE TO DISABILITY AND AGED SERVICES



GLEN EIRA CITY COUNCIL - CARERS COMMUNITY GLEN EIRA E-NEWSLETTER

This newsletter has been developed specifically for carers and includes information on services and support available to carers internally and from external service providers and community organisations. You can read the E-Newsletters [here](#).

CARER'S COMMUNITY *Glen Eira*



3. GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CARERS

The following resources provide information to councils to develop a more comprehensive understanding of carers in their communities

ABS Data

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has data on carers. Visit their Health Statistic pages [here](#) for a nationwide summary of carers, including breakdown of ages, sex, income, employment (etc). Victorian data can be downloaded from their site [here](#).

Surveys

Councils can use surveys to better understand the needs of carers, however be mindful that carers can often feel "over-surveyed". Draw on existing data where possible.

When a survey is required it could be distributed through council service networks, neighbourhood houses, libraries and council's online/social media platforms, and in council newsletters. These platforms also provide opportunities to develop links with carers in the community

The National Carers Survey

[The National Carers survey](#) is a great starting point for developing a local carers survey. The 73 questions explored through this survey have been refined over 20 years (since 2002 as part of the NSW Carers Survey). They cover 6 topic areas:

- carers relationship
- caring Role
- services and supports
- paid work
- health and wellbeing
- about the carer

Council could select from these questions to improve understanding local carers.

Results from the National Carers Survey held in 2020 can be viewed [here](#).

Showcasing the Stories of Local Carers

Showcasing the stories of local carers can help your community to understand the unique role of carers. Some councils have captured these stories as part of National Carers Week and International Day of People with a Disability.

Greater Geelong City Council - My Story Project

The My Story Project is one of the City's key events in the annual celebration of International Day of People with Disability. It is an opportunity for people with a lived experience of disability and mental health challenges to find their individual voice and 'tell their own story in their own way'. In 2021 the project told the story of the local Wellways Carers Group. This group of carers have been meeting for the last two years to support each other in the role of caring for loved ones experiencing mental health challenges.



Knox City Council - Carers Week 2019

As part of National Carers Week 2019, Knox City Council shared Olivia's story to highlight the amazing work of carers in their community.



4. PROGRAMS FOR CARERS

Many councils provide respite and other programs and services to carers in their communities. Traditionally these have been provided through the Home and Community Care Program (HACC) and Home and Community Care Program for Young People (HACCPYP). However, recent changes to the funding models for these programs will impact on the ability of councils to continue these programs into the future.

The Victorian Support for Carers Program funding has enabled some councils to provide respite and other support to carers, with other councils funding programs through other grants and council revenue.

Some programs and activities may need council approval before they can be implemented. If you do need to seek council approval you may want to consider including the following in your council report/project proposal:

- Carers are diverse and make up 11 per cent of community, this equates to x number of people in our municipality (if you know the exact figure include it here).
- Note any goals and/or actions from council strategies/policies that the program will help deliver.
- You may wish to reference responsibilities under the Carers Recognition Act where appropriate.

Respite

CASE STUDY 2: MAROONDAH CITY COUNCIL: VERA (VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT RECREATION ACTIVITY)

Background

The Virtual Engagement Recreation Activity (VERA) is a new program offered through Maroondah's Social Support Group team at Kerrabee Centre (part of Maroondah City Council). Developed in July 2020 VERA is a series of interactive fun, social and wellbeing group programs conducted online via Microsoft Teams. The program has been designed to include everyone, from people who use a computer or tablet with confidence through to people who have limited (if any) experience with technology. Programs run through VERA have included:

- exercise, meditation, mindfulness, health and wellbeing
- craft (supplies provided)
- guest speakers
- entertainers
- word games, puzzles, bingo and brain teasers
- cooking together on-line
- tours of local places of interest (eg art exhibitions)
- conversations and friendship
- learning skills to open up a world of new possibilities

VERA supports carers by providing respite (the person they care for is engaged in a social activity freeing up carers time) and/or providing an activity that carers and the person they care for can do together.

Drivers for the Program

COVID-19 and associated lockdowns were the driver for the development of the Social Technology Project. Council needed a safe way to engage with clients and their carers in a meaningful way to maintain vital social connects and supports. From this VERA was born.

Objectives of VERA

The Social Technology Project had a number of objectives:

- Provide practical pathways for clients to participate in meaningful online connections
- Positively impact on client mental health, wellbeing and address loneliness
- Improve client confidence and minimise barriers in using technology

Benefits to Clients, Carers and Council

VERA has given council the opportunity to engage with, and include, a greater number of clients and their carers in daily activities. Moving to an online platform meant council was able to engage with residents who prior to COVID lockdowns, were not comfortable with, or able to engage in face-to-face activities.

VERA ensured some of councils most vulnerable residents were able to engage in meaningful activities and counter the isolation that was experienced by many people during lockdowns. It also ensured that carers still had opportunities for respite while their loved one was engaged in social activities.

Ongoing development of the program has given council a greater understanding of the interests of their clients and carers, increasing their ability to create programs and activities that are interesting and engaging. The training delivered during the set up of the program increased the skills, capacity and confidence of council officers (and participants).

Resources Required to Deliver VERA

The program cost council around \$56,000 to deliver, including the purchasing of twenty-six android tablets and six smart phones, along with a number of data USBs to go with these devices. This ensured clients had access to the program no matter their budget or experience with technology.

Council staff attended one-hundred-and-twenty hours of meetings along with engaging in forty-eight hours of client contact.

One-hundred hours of staff time was used to develop resources for the program and train staff, carers and clients in how to use the technology.

Challenges in Setting up and Delivering VERA

As with any new program council did experience some challenges along the way, predominantly in the early planning and building stages. They found navigating the tablet interface could be complicated at times. Thorough research, comprehensive training for staff and participants was an essential component of the program to ensure problems with technology did not become a barrier to participation.

Training and troubleshooting resources were developed to assist staff, clients and carers to overcome this challenge. Training staff in how to use Team Viewer (remote desktop software) was essential to enable council officers to assist clients and carers and provide technical support without having to visit a client's home.

Some participants felt uncomfortable connecting to the sessions through Teams. Council offered the option for these people to call into sessions using their phones instead. At times, this may have prevented carers and clients from fully engaging with their peers and getting most out of their participation in activities.

Future Plans for VERA

The program has been so successful Council is looking to expand its offerings into the future. Council will be running in person technology education session to increase the skills of participants and increase opportunities for them to engage socially in the online world. They are also investigating new technologies, like virtual reality, to broaden the experiences of clients and their carers. Council is also looking for opportunities to partner with other councils and organisations across Victoria and inter-state to broaden the experiences of participants. VERA means there is an endless list of possibilities to connect with people across Australia and the world, allowing participants to meet new people.

Feedback from one of VERA's Participants

"VERA gives to me an assortment of different things that I need in my life. That's people, that's something to do, something to chat about and I can choose what I want to do."



Support

Boorondara City Council - SPACE4US program

In 2021 Boroondara City Council delivered the SPACE4US program. This was a peer support program for young people who had a parent, sibling, or other adult with a mental illness. Having a family member who is affected by a mental illness can be a confusing and isolating experience for young people. The purpose of the SPACE4US program was to build a sense of community, provide some respite and increase participants' understanding of what their family member was experiencing.

The program's objectives were to help young people:

- have fun
- increase knowledge of mental health and illness
- improve coping strategies and help-seeking behaviour
- improve the sense of connection to their peers, family and community
- provide opportunities to engage and support families and carers of participants.

Activities included:

- self-care: mindfulness practices, art therapy, developing confidence in help seeking
- mental health promotion: developing more insight in to mental health and mental illness
- excursions/activities: laser tag, bowling, lunches and art workshops

Pathway for Carers

The [Pathways for Carers](#) program offers carers of people with a disability or a mental health issue an opportunity to share walks with other carers and to learn more about news, services, and support available to them. A growing number of councils are becoming involved in the program.

Pathways for Carers is a Victorian Government funded program. The free service typically involves a once a month casual walk around a local walking trail concluding at a local community hall or café where the group can listen to guest speakers over refreshments and a morning tea. Many councils have arrangements with local businesses to provide refreshments at the end of each walk.

Pathways for Carers describes the program as “fresh air, a friendly face and a hot cuppa at the end!”

See “[A Word from Local Council](#)” for an insight into the program.

Bayside City Council offers social activities in a community-based group setting for carers. These excursions include lunches, bus outings and group activities at local centres.

Manningham City Council provides carers with in home respite when they wish to take a day away from their caring duties. Council also hosts a social support group called 'Saturday Cuppa and Chat' providing an opportunity for all local carers to come together and connect with one another.

Whittlesea City Council provides support through their Support for Carers Program. This includes:

- Connections Carer Support Group is a support groups for female carers. It includes 6x3 hour sessions each week.
- Day trips or two-night getaways provide a forum for carers to make friendships, share and spend meaningful time together with the person they care for, with support from qualified staff.
- Carer Information and education sessions, run in partnership with CarerLinks North

Geelong City Council senior citizen clubs host leisure activities such as bingo, barbeques, cards, concerts, tailored exercise, indoor bowls and line dancing. These activities are offered to citizens over the age of 50, and residents with disabilities and their carers. Council also offers respite programs for all carers, and provides recreational activities, outings and structured programs.

Murrindindi Shire Council provides a telephone contact for carers, as an opportunity to talk confidentially with a local and long-term carer; who can assist them in accessing the best resources and services available to them.

Darebin's Yanada House runs a carer support group for anyone in a caring role. This Group is a safe place for carers to talk with and support other carers. The group provides guest speakers, outings, opportunities to socialise and respite for carers. Council also provides Dementia Support Groups for people living with memory loss and their carers.

The City of Melbourne offers carers a range of programs and events including:

- Carer Call Club – social group chat over the phone
- Information sessions about health and wellbeing
- LGBTIQ+ carer support program (in partnership with queerspace and Carers Victoria).
- Monthly walking group and morning tea
 - Exercise programs (open to general community)
 - Monthly emails with information and resources

Buloke Shire Council provides valuable respite to carers through its Home and Community Care Program, allowing carers to pursue other activities, interests and personal tasks. Respite is provided in a number of ways, including inside and outside the client's home and in the community, where individuals participate in community activities with an independence Support Carer.

Brimbank City Council has a range of programs that aim to promote carers health and overall wellbeing, including:

- Carer Support Groups
- Wellbeing Programs
- Parent Groups
- Events
- Seminars

Glen Eira City Council offers a free weekly exercise class for carers who live in or care for someone in Glen Eira. Classes include Dance, Yoga, Circuit and Pilates. If the weather is suitable classes may be run outdoors. There is also the opportunity to relax and chat with other carers after class.

Other ideas - Victorian Seniors Festival

As many carers in the community are older, or are caring for an older loved one, councils may wish to consider including a carers component to their Victorian Seniors Festival events.

CASE STUDY 3: KNOX CITY COUNCIL CARERS EXERCISE PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

Knox City Council began delivering its Carers Exercise class in early 2019. Delivered in partnership with Knox Leisureworks council initially provided local carers with one free in person exercise class each week, including use of the pool and a free coffee and chat after the session. Due to popular demand, it has increased to two classes per week (one face to face, one online) during COVID lockdown in 2020

PROGRAM AIMS

The exercise program aims to improve the health and wellbeing of carers through regular exercise and social connections.

DRIVERS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

In 2016 Council determined its role in disability service provision would be a continued and strengthened leadership role in planning, advocacy, coordination and action to enhance access and inclusion for people with disabilities across all life stages within Knox. This involves providing information, resources and support to people with a disability, their parents and carers.

To deliver this role council's Disability Inclusion Team reached out to its carers to identify and address gaps in services in the municipality. It was through this process the carers identified the need for the exercise program.

RESOURCES REQUIRED TO DELIVER THE PROGRAM

The Exercise Program is delivered by council's Disability Inclusion Team. This team includes around the equivalent of 2 EFT (part-time Team Leader and two part-time project officers focussing on Early Years and Parents and Carers), which comes out of council's operational budget.

Classes are free for carers and their delivery involves minimal resources from council. Council funds the instructor and officer time to prepare and attend classes. The partnership with the local leisure centre covers the cost of the venue and coffee.

Carers are often on a low income and have additional expenses caring for their family member or friend. Making the class free removes one of the barriers to attending.

Council promotes the program predominantly through social media and council's website.

Officers report back to council on the program each year as part of a wider report on the Knox Municipal Disability Leadership Program.

BENEFITS TO CARERS AND COUNCIL

Carers often put their own wellbeing last. The exercise class was identified as an opportunity to get the double benefits from regular exercise and the social connection provided by a group of people sharing similar life experiences.

A member of the Disability Inclusion Team attends and joins in on the session. This gives participants a sense of connection with council and a point of call to raise issues or concerns they may have. It has helped them feel they have a voice in council.

The exercise class also provides an opportunity for council officers to engage with carers in an informal setting, to provide updates and receive feedback on a range of council proposals or initiatives.

CONTENT OF THE CLASSES

Council and participants tried a range of different exercise classes before settling on Flow and Tone which is a mixture of Tai Chi, Pilates, yoga, and all conclude with five to ten minutes of guided relaxation. Flow and Tone seems to best suite the abilities of all the participants.

The instructor is a qualified experienced trainer, with an understanding of the experiences of carers and is motivating and inspiring. She structures each class to suit all abilities from beginners to advanced. Classes run for 45-60 minutes.

THE IMPACT OF COVID ON THE PROGRAM

Because the group already had a strong social connection pre-covid the move to an on-line platform was fairly smooth once the first lockdown commenced. Feedback from participants resulted in the online classes being delivered twice a week, as carers really valued the time to focus on their own wellbeing and connect with their peers during what could be an isolating experience. The zoom classes made participation easy for group members as it saved precious time (no more travel), there was no need to organise additional care for the loved one, there were no worries about bringing COVID into the house and the classes did not require any special equipment to participate.

The strong connection with this group of carers lead to the development of a series of webinars and other events for carers during lockdown, including the importance of routine during lockdown for children with Autism, de-cluttering your space for carers, mindfulness and back to school after lockdown for children with Autism to name a few.

FUTURE PLANS FOR THE PROGRAM

The exercise class has now morphed into a hybrid program. Carers told council they valued the face to face interaction a weekly class provides, and also appreciated the flexibility provided by a virtual class. As a result council now provides a weekly in person exercise class and an online class.

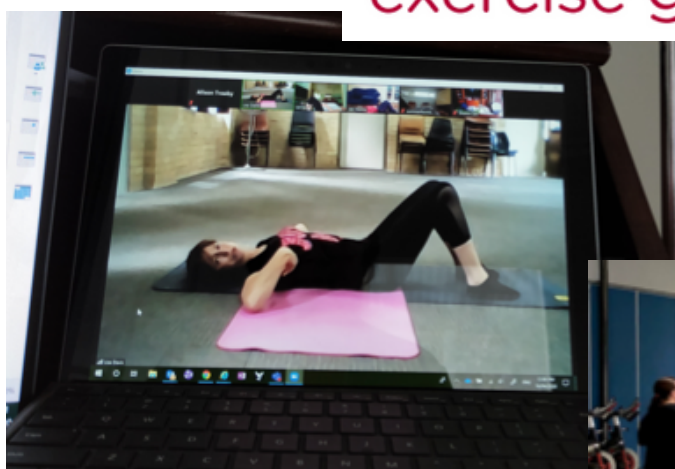
FEEDBACK FROM CLASS PARTICIPANTS

"The stretching, bending improved the stiffness in my body and my physical health and wellbeing. As a result I feel less stressed which therefore helps me in my caring role."

"Thank you for offering such a great program to encourage us and make us feel welcome and acknowledged."

During COVID Lockdowns: "It helped me have something to look forward to, something regular, routine, which is really missing at the moment."

"The activity has helped me in my caring role to relieve my stress, frustration and devastation from lock down."



5. NATIONAL CARERS WEEK

National Carers Week, taking place in October each year, provides councils with an opportunity to recognise, celebrate, and raise awareness among all Australians about the diversity of Australia's 2.65 million carers and their caring roles. Victorian councils have regularly been involved in providing activities for carers in their communities during National Carers Week.

Some activities councils may wish to consider as part of National Carer's Week include:

- Re-posting social media from other organisations, such as Carers Victoria
- Promoting businesses and activities that provide carer and companion card discounts,
- Hosting council events or partnering with community groups like Men's Sheds, Country Women's Association, Neighbourhood Houses, support groups, community health networks. These could include a lunch or morning/afternoon tea, guest speaker or activity.

Knox City Council – Free Online Events

As part of National Carers Week 2021, council expanded their usual services with a series of free online events aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of carers. These included:

Too Peas in Podcast webinar

Introduction to Mindfulness for Carers

Come N Try Carers Exercise Class

Achieving Your Goals Webinar

Whittlesea City Council - Health and Wellbeing Workshops

Council partnered with Carers Victoria to provide six free health and wellbeing workshops for unpaid carers living in the City of Whittlesea throughout October. Workshop themes centred around communication, setting boundaries and dealing with frustration. Find more information about the workshops [here](#).

Moonee Valley City Council – Local Carers Stories

Council developed a series of short videos about local carers as part of a special Thank You Event coinciding with National Carers Week in 2018.

Watch the Carers Stories [here](#).

6. PARTNERSHIPS

Councils often work in partnership with other organisations to deliver programs and support for carers. These partnerships often involve health providers, carer organisations and Neighbourhood Houses. The strong relationship between Neighbourhood Houses and councils can assist in developing localised supports for carers.

The Carer Friendly Program

The Carer Friendly Program is a partnership between Carers Victoria, Neighbourhood Houses and councils to provide carers with opportunities to connect and engage in carer friendly communities in local, easily accessible space.

As part of the program, Neighbourhood Houses and councils undertake specific training to develop greater awareness of the varied needs of carers, how they can better support carers, offer specific carer activities and provide pathways to carer support programs. On completion they become designated Carer Friendly place, easily identifiable by the Carer Friendly logo. Visit [Carers Victoria](#) for more information.



Melbourne City Council provides the [LGBTIQA+ carer support program](#) in partnership with Queerspace and Carers Victoria.

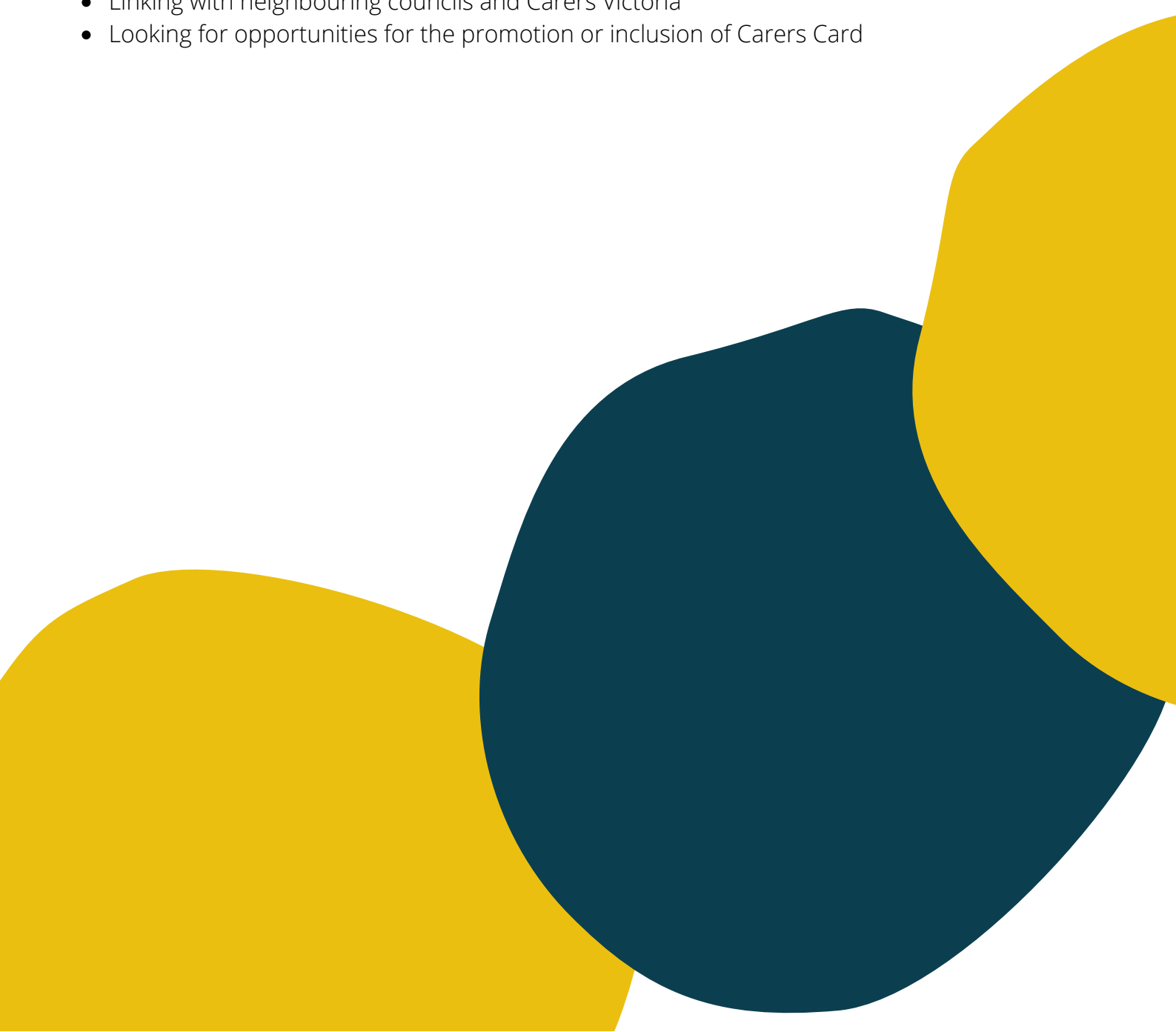
This group is open to members of the LGBTIQA+ community who provide care for a partner, parent or sibling, housemate or friend. The group meets monthly and provides an opportunity to relax and unwind, build knowledge and understanding and connect socially with other LGBTIQA+ carers.

LGBTIQA+ carer support
program

7. NOMINATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR CARERS TO A STAFF MEMBER OR TEAM

Not every council can have a dedicated officer to deliver a carer specific program or activities for council.

Councils may wish to consider designating carer responsibilities to an officer, small number of officers or a team to assist community members and help council meet obligations. Depending on available resources, the responsibilities could include:

- Being the point of contact for community members, to put them in touch with local or statewide supports
 - Developing content for annual reporting on the Carers Recognition Act
 - Keep a carers webpage up to date (when required)
 - Seeking funding or partnership opportunities (if time permits)
 - Linking with neighbouring councils and Carers Victoria
 - Looking for opportunities for the promotion or inclusion of Carers Card
- 

8. Tracking Impacts

Tracking the uptake or involvement by carers in programs can help with reporting back to council and the community and can assist with annual reporting on the Carers Recognition Act. Council could consider using the following as a way to measure progress and gauge the impact initiatives and activities are having on local carers:

- record hits on a dedicated webpage and specific online documents
- record attendance at carer specific events/programs
- seek carers feedback as part of National Carers Week
- full evaluation of a project/program

Carers are constantly busy providing care, they often have little to no time away from their caring role. They can find it complex to have a break, and often feel overwhelmed by their high responsibility and emotional role.

We can all help carers through providing information that is clear, concise and correct, and understanding that on some days the life of a carer can feel overwhelming.

A simple listening ear and a kind approach to the challenges many carers face can make a huge difference.

Carers Victoria is available with training, workshops, consultation, networking opportunities and advice to assist councils to respond to the needs of carers in their municipality.

