

# SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN CARE RELATIONSHIPS IN VICTORIA

## CARERS RECOGNITION ACT 2012

### Responsibilities and obligations of government and organisations

From 1 July 2012, Victoria has an Act that recognises people in care relationships and the role of carers in our community. The *Carers Recognition Act 2012* sets out principles that recognise and support people in care relationships and includes obligations for State government, councils, and organisations that support people in care relationships. The *Victorian charter supporting people in care relationships* has been updated to reflect the principles in the Act.

#### What organisations are affected by the Act?

The Carers Recognition Act applies to:

- > State government departments
- > councils within the meaning of the *Local Government Act 1989*, and
- > organisations funded by government that are responsible for developing or providing policies, programs or services that affect people in care relationships.

This includes funded care agencies providing home based care services for children and young people in foster, kinship and permanent care arrangements.

The Act does not apply to family day care services, children's services, education and care services, preschool programs and schools.

#### Obligations under the Act

Under the Act, State government departments, councils, and organisations funded by government to provide programs or services to people in care relationships, need to take all practicable measures to:

- > ensure staff are aware of and understand the principles in the Act
- > ensure staff promote the principles to people in care relationships, so that people in care relationships are aware of and understand the principles in the Act
- > reflect the care relationship principles in developing, providing or evaluating support and assistance for those in care relationships.

### How can the principles of the Act be promoted?

State government departments, councils and relevant funded organisations, should educate their staff on the Act, for example by:

- > developing a staff awareness strategy about the Act principles and charter, and what they mean for staff
- > distributing copies of the principles of the Act and copies of the charter to staff
- > including information in staff induction about the Act and charter, and what the Act principles and charter mean in the way staff do their work
- > holding a staff forum where management or the CEO make a presentation on the Act principles and charter.

To inform people in care relationships, and assist their understanding of the Act and what it means for them, State government departments, councils and relevant funded organisations, can:

- > distribute information about the Act and the charter to carers, and make copies of the charter available to people
- > include information about the Act and charter in mail outs or newsletters, or add it to existing information kits
- > include the Act principles and other information in training and orientation material for carers
- > put the Act and charter poster on notice boards and information in reception areas
- > put information on the organisation's internet site and online forums, or include web links to the Act and charter

- > use networks, like organisational or carer support groups and programs, to promote the Act and charter
- > include the Act and charter, or make presentations on them, at forums and other events such as local community events
- > put information about the Act and charter in media promotions or community awareness strategies such as Carers Week, National Child Protection Week, International Day of People with Disability, Mental Health Week, World Alzheimer's Day, Dementia Awareness Week, and Seniors Week.

### What else can state government, councils and funded organisations, do to meet their obligations?

Other actions that State government departments, councils and relevant funded organisations can take are to:

- > review principles, values, ethics, and policies, and consider how they can be aligned with the Act and charter. For example government departments can check that their human resource policies support carers to balance work and their role of carer, by including carers leave and flexible working conditions, and scheduling regular meetings at a time a carer can attend.
- > review procedures and practices regarding service provision and consider how they can be aligned with the Act and charter. For example a funded organisation can develop a checklist that includes discussion with the people in a care relationship about their opinions being sought and acted on, from assessment to review stages.

- > provide services that suit the cultural identity of the people in the care relationship. For example a funded organisation may seek to organise culturally sensitive get togethers for people from a similar cultural background.
- > develop an implementation plan that includes satisfaction surveys and a complaints mechanism. For example a funded organisation can distribute satisfaction surveys at assessment and review meetings between carers, those receiving care and workers.

#### **How can state government, councils and funded organisations, monitor their activities in meeting their obligations?**

State government departments, councils and relevant funded organisations can develop strategies to evaluate their effectiveness in meeting their obligations under the Act, and monitor on an ongoing basis awareness and understanding of the Act and charter. For example:

- > use annual surveys to gain feedback about the Act and charter from people in care relationships
- > update complaints procedures to reflect the existence of the Act and charter
- > partner and collaborate with other organisations and agencies and Victorian Government program areas in monitoring and evaluation activities
- > address issues raised and make improvements where required.

#### **Do state government, councils and funded organisations, have to report on compliance with the Act?**

The Act says that State government, councils and organisations funded by government to provide programs or services to people in care relationships, must report on how they met their obligations under the Act in their annual report. This may be as simple as including a paragraph detailing the actions taken during the year to comply with the Act.

#### **Ongoing recognition of the Act**

State government, councils and relevant funded organisations can use the Act to support relationships with carers and other services involved in care, including the care of children and young people.

Keep the Act poster on display, and the charter easily available, as a reminder to everyone of their role in supporting and recognising care relationships.

People in care relationships may become more aware of what they can suggest for planning and delivering services to support people in care relationships, and more confident about expressing their needs.

Organisations need to find ways for people in care relationships to have a say in care planning and service delivery.



## Getting information

Information about the Act and the *Victorian charter supporting people in care relationships* can be downloaded from [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/carersact](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/carersact)

Other available resources include:

- > Carers Recognition Act Information Sheet
- > Information for carers and those they care for – Information Sheet
- > Promotional materials including information in a range of community languages.