

# Older carers

## Background summary

An ageing population is a significant issue for both Banyule and Nillumbik local government areas, and less pronounced for Darebin. Older people who are disadvantaged, vulnerable and face inequity are more likely to experience poor health and are less likely to access appropriate support (World Health Organisation, 2017). Both Darebin and Banyule have areas experiencing significant disadvantage.

At the North East Healthy Communities healthy ageing forum in February, three broad priority areas were identified:

- Social connectivity and isolation;
- Transport; and
- Older carers.

## What we know

- Just over 12% of Victoria's population are providing care for another person
- Three in five people will care for an ageing spouse, parent, friend or relative
- Carers have the lowest wellbeing of any population sub group
- One third of the 2.6 million Australians in unpaid caring roles have severe or extremely severe depression
- 90% of carers don't access formal respite
- Being a carer increases the risk of social isolation and loneliness
- 50% of primary carers are on a low income and many find it hard to cover living expenses, save money or build up superannuation and often have to find money for extra expenses like heating and laundry, medicines, disability aids, health care and transport

- Carers often ignore their own health and are 40% more likely to suffer from a chronic health condition
- The demands of caring can leave little time for other family members or friends
- Carers often have to deal with strong emotions, like anger, guilt, grief and distress, that can spill into other relationships and cause conflict and frustration
- Many carers miss out on important life opportunities, particularly for paid work, a career and education (Carers Australia Vic website)
- Peer support is often more beneficial than a group or online education program
- When carers are supported, they are more likely to sustain their caring role, lowering the chance of relinquishment to care facilities
- Carers with time-consuming caring roles, lacking informal support networks and financially disadvantaged have worse health

## **Those most at risk**

Older carers at particular risk include those:

- On low incomes
- Caring for more than one person
- Who live with disability or compromised health
- Living in low socioeconomic and/or rural areas
- Living with housing stress or homelessness
- Who are childless
- With low levels of literacy where this reduces access to information and services
- With limited or no information and communication technology skills, where this reduces their ability to locate and access services.

## **Useful support for carers program examples:**

1. Volunteer peer lead support

<https://www.carerswa.asn.au/publications/carer-peer-volunteer-program/>

<https://www.tacsi.org.au/work/weavers-peer-to-peer-carer-support/>

<http://www.carersvictoria.org.au/Assets/Files/lulus-model-feb-2008.pdf>

<https://www.merrihealth.org.au/services/carer-support/peer-support/>

## **Useful links**

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2012). *Australian social trends: Older carers*. Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra. Available at:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features40Dec+2012>

2. Carers Trust, (2015). *Caring about older carers: Providing support for people caring in later life*. Carers Trust: London. Available at:  
[https://professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/caring\\_about\\_older\\_carers.pdf](https://professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/caring_about_older_carers.pdf)
3. Scrutton, J., and Creighton, H., (2015). The emotional wellbeing of older carers. ILC-UK: London. Available at: [file:///fs01/bch%20shared/BCH%20-%20Programs%20And%20Services/Teams/NEHC/Integrated%20Care/Active%20&%20Healthy%20Ageing/WELLBEING\\_OF\\_CARERS\\_final.pdf](file:///fs01/bch%20shared/BCH%20-%20Programs%20And%20Services/Teams/NEHC/Integrated%20Care/Active%20&%20Healthy%20Ageing/WELLBEING_OF_CARERS_final.pdf)
4. Thomson, C., and Hill, T., (2016). *Older carers and social inclusion: Feedback report*. Social Policy and Research Centre: Available at:  
[https://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/SPRCFile/Older\\_Carers\\_and\\_Social\\_Inclusion\\_Feedback\\_report.pdf](https://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/SPRCFile/Older_Carers_and_Social_Inclusion_Feedback_report.pdf)