

Communique – April 2022

The Queensland Carers Advisory Council met on 20 April 2022. This was the first meeting of the newly appointed Council for a two-year term.

The Council comprises: four carers (one grandparent carer); four representatives of organisations that support carers; and representatives from four Queensland Government departments that provide support or services for carers.

Carers attending the meeting were: Ms Slawka Bell; Ms Melissa Williams and Dr Nancy Spencer. Organisational representatives were: Ms Debra Cottrell (Carers Queensland); Mr Adam Campbell (Wellways Australia); Ms Irene Clelland (Arafmi); Ms Robynne Cooper (Anglicare, Central Queensland). Ms Natalie Bird, a carer, was unable to attend the meeting.

The Departments of Health and Education and the Office of the Public Guardian were represented.

Dr Chris Sarra, Director-General, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, is the Chairperson. Council members elected Ms Slawka Bell as the Deputy Chairperson for the first 12 months.

The Honourable Craig Crawford, Minister Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships attended the Council meeting.

The Minister noted extraordinary contribution that carers make to the lives of the people they care for and to their communities. He recognised the value of having the Council's expert advice on how policy, programs, services and strategies can best meet the needs of carers.

The Minister and the Council members discussed:

- areas of the *Queensland Carer's (Recognition) Act 2008* that may need to be reviewed
- the difficulties faced by young carers, particularly relating to education or training
- research gaps for all carer cohorts, including young carers and grandparent carers
- the need to raise the awareness of the economic and social value of carers
- the opportunity cost that carers face over their lifetime, through reduced earnings and lower retirement incomes
- the social isolation that carers face, often leading to other mental and physical health problems
- the social and economic returns to government of investing in carers, through increased support and services, that will result in future savings to the economy
- the need for all workplaces to support for carers through flexible work arrangements, and recognising the principles of the Queensland Carers Charter

These issues will continue to be a focus for the Council over the next two years. The Council will develop a workplan to guide actions and outcomes.

Dr Sarra announced the availability of \$200,000 to support the important work of the Council.