Ref: AF23/17394

4 August 2023

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600

Re: Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers - NSW Carers Advisory Council submission

Dear Committee Secretary,

The NSW Carers Advisory Council (the Council) writes to you regarding the terms of reference for the inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs into the recognition of unpaid carers.

The Council provides advice to the NSW Government on legislation, policy and other matters relating to carers. For more information, about the Council and our members, the majority of whom are carers, please visit our website at www.facs.nsw.gov.au/inclusion/advisory-councils/carers.

Following are the Council's responses to the terms of reference.

Term of Reference	Council comments
• the effectiveness of the Act and the associated Statement of Australia's Carers in raising recognition and awareness of the unpaid caring role, including its obligations on public service agencies	
• developments in the policy landscape at a Commonwealth level since the Act's passage in 2010	
• the effectiveness of existing state, territory and international recognition of	Within the *NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010*, defining 'carer' in legislation provides the foundation for recognising, acknowledging and engaging with carers' unique needs and experiences.

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Term of Reference	Council comments
unpaid care (statutory or other practice)	Although the term 'carer' is still often used inconsistently in the media and general discourse, the Act provides a clear basis to differentiate and consider carers as separate from, for example, paid support workers or other groups. Considering and defining carers as a group has allowed recognition and consistency of approach. The NSW Carers Charter is also very useful as an articulation of what support for carers means. Both of these are a useful foundation for building further policy and strategic work in this space. However, it is also important to make sure that the Act is known, understood and applied across the sector. Circumstantially, there may still be some progress to make here.

• how to better identify the role of unpaid carers in Australian society and the role of a reformed Act, with regard to:
  o understanding the value of unpaid care,
  o the needs of specific cohorts such as young carers, First Nations carers, LGBTIQA+ carers, or culturally and linguistically diverse carers,
  o the meaningful role that flexible workplaces play in unpaid care, and
  o the Government's broad agenda in relation to the care and support economy, the importance of employment participation, and a strong focus on gender equity, and
	In considering both paid and unpaid care as part of a 'care economy', there is a danger that the specific needs of unpaid carers may be overlooked. Unpaid carers and paid care workers have very different needs, and it is important to maintain this distinction. Work and support to address the needs of a general 'care economy' may favour the paid care sector unless specific effort is made to support unpaid carers.
	
	Additionally, market thinking is likely to place additional burden on unpaid carers, who by definition will provide the best quality care at the lowest cost in standard economic terms. Normal market forces such as freedom of choice do not translate well to care and caring. The value that carers provide to society is not easily reducible to a dollar cost.

• any other related matters, noting that the adequacy of payments for carers is out of scope for this inquiry.	

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On behalf of the Council and carers across NSW, I ask that you review our feedback taking into consideration needs and the role of carers. We also give permission for our submission to be published.

If you wish to discuss this further, please contact me on 0408 020 904 or at NSWCarersAdvisoryCouncilSecretariat@facs.nsw.gov.au.

Sincerely,
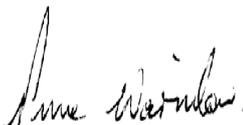
Prue Warrilow
Chair – NSW Carers Advisory Council