

Guide for public sector managers

NSW public sector managers need to know that:

- There are approximately 850,000 carers in NSW¹.
- Many carers are employed throughout the public sector.
- Many carers come into contact with public service agencies as a client or because the person they care for is a client of a public sector agency.
- The NSW *Carers (Recognition) Act 2010* (the Act) establishes a Carers Charter to recognise carers.
- Implementation of the Act will increase awareness of carers and their needs.
- Some carers do not realise they are, or do not want to identify as, a carer. Some cultures do not identify with the term carer.
- Flexible workplace policies that benefit carers also benefit non-carer staff and create a loyal, diverse workforce.
- Working carers who know about flexible working options are less likely to leave the workforce than those who do not.
- Under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*, employers are required to reasonably accommodate the caring responsibilities of their employees unless they can show that it would cause them unjustifiable hardship. A refusal to consider requests for flexible working arrangements because of a person's caring responsibilities could constitute discrimination.

Facts about working carers

- Many carers successfully balance employment with caring however every caring situation is different.
- Working age carers with high levels of caring responsibilities are likely to reduce work hours or leave the workforce, both of which reduce carer earnings.
- Carers benefit from awareness of carers leave policies, access to flexible working arrangements (work from home, flexible hours/start and finish times, part-time, job share) and a supportive work culture².
- Working carers have greater motivation and productivity and reduced absenteeism and sickness. When supported they are less likely to leave a job, taking their skills with them³.

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2009) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Cat. No. 4430.0.

2 Vickerstaff, S., Loretto, W., Milne, A., Alden, E., Billings, J., and White, P (2009) Employment support for carers, Department for work and pensions, Research Report No 597.

3 Vickerstaff et al.

NSW public sector managers and their staff must:

- Be aware of and understand the NSW Carers Charter – human service staff must reflect the principles in daily activities.
- Consult with appropriate organisations or bodies representing carers when developing policies that impact on carers.
- Consider the NSW Carers Charter in the development of internal human resource policies.

Some ways human service managers and their staff can reflect the Carers Charter principles

- Support staff to combine caring and work through flexibility and understanding.
- Make sure all staff have the same rights, choices and opportunities.
- Become familiar with the definition of a carer found in this Act*.
- Make sure staff have access to information about the above.

How to provide services that reflect the NSW Carers Charter

- Consider the views of carers – they are the experts.
- Include carers in the assessment, planning, delivery and review of services that impact on them and the person they care for.
- Provide information about and/or refer carers to appropriate support services.
- Acknowledge that carers have their own needs within and outside the caring role.
- Provide support for carers which is timely, responsive, accessible and appropriate.

Further reading

- *Carers (Recognition) Act 2010*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*
- Personnel Handbook
- Flexible Working website:
www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/flexible-working
- Implementation guidelines for public sector agencies

Other fact sheets in this series

- Who are carers?
- Guide to the NSW Carers
(Recognition) Act 2010
- Guide for public sector staff

More information and resources

NSW Health

Web: www.health.nsw.gov.au/carers

Email: Carers@moh.health.nsw.gov.au

NSW Health Carers Program Carer Support Officer contacted through your Local Health District

Department of Family and Community Services

Web: www.facs.nsw.gov.au | **Email:** nswcarersact@facs.nsw.gov.au

* NOTE: Broader definitions of a carer can be found in industrial awards, other legislation and internal human resources policies.