

CARERS RECOGNITION ACT 2004

What is the Carers Recognition Act 2004?

The legislation was developed in response to calls from carers for greater recognition and consideration by service providers. In passing the Carers Recognition Act 2004 the Western Australian Government acknowledges the more than 320,000 carers in Western Australia who provide informal or unpaid care to family members, friends or neighbours. It was the first legislation of its type in Australia. The WA Carers Recognition Act (2004) formally recognises the need for carers to be involved in service policy, planning and development conducted by the Department of Health that may affect carers and the role of carers.

What does the Carers Recognition Act 2004 mean for service providers?

Under the legislation all State Government funded or administered health and disability service providers will have to take all practicable measures to ensure that they comply with the Carers Charter. In addition, the Department of Health, public hospitals must involve carers, (or persons or bodies that represent carers), in any policy or program development, or strategic or operational planning that might affect carers and the role of carers. These State Government agencies also report annually to the Carers Advisory Council on their performance and obligations under this Act.

Western Australian Carers Charter

- 1 Carers must be treated with respect and dignity.
- 2 The role of carers must be recognised by including carers in the assessment, planning, delivery and review of services that impact on them and the role of carers.
- 3 The views and needs of carers must be taken into account along with the views, needs and best interests of people receiving care when decisions are made that impact on carers and the role of carers.
- 4 Complaints made by carers in relation to services that impact on them and the role of carers must be given due attention and consideration.

Disclaimer: To the best of our knowledge, this information was correct at the time of printing. For any further information please call the Carers WA Advisory Service on 1300 CARERS (1300 227 377). Factsheet: Carers Recognition Act – March 2016



Case study

Mary is the primary carer for her adult daughter Alice who has an intellectual disability.

Alice was recently hospitalised with a virus and is being discharged. Alice saw the doctor by herself and received instructions on how and when to take her medications. Alice asked for information about the side effects of the medication but the doctor would not respond, despite several requests. As Mary was not consulted in the discharge plan, she is unsure what medications Alice needs and when she should give them to her.

Mary complained to the hospital but was unhappy with the result. Mary then contacted HaDSCO and made a complaint under the *Health and Disability Services (Complaints) Act 1995* on behalf of Alice as a patient, and herself as a carer under the *Carers Recognition Act 2004*. HaDSCO liaised with Mary, Alice and the hospital to resolve the matter.

Mary and Alice had their issues resolved and the hospital was encouraged to communicate better and to involve carers in discharge planning.



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