Depending on when you read this, we may or may not have completed our first Ks for Carers event. Ks for Carers is a walking event held over a week in June, culminating in a five kilometre group walk in each of our 13 office locations across Queensland. It is an event that may raise some funds for the organisation, but which is predominantly about raising awareness of carers in, hopefully, a fun and healthy way.

We all know the benefits of exercise and maintaining our own health and wellbeing but sometimes it’s just not that easy to do. Over the years I have had a very on and off relationship with exercise. I’ve tried it lots, and given it up as many times. I’ve gone from competition netball and basketball, to C grade mixed indoor comps. I’ve worn the sweat bands and the leg warmers while doing star jumps in my lounge room to a Jane Fonda (or that guy that looked like Leo Sayer) video. I’ve looked guiltily at many a lapsed gym membership I paid a year in advance and only went for three months; and even more guiltily at the 10 session card I bought that still had unused sessions on it three months later. I’ve tried the all-female gym and the 24 hour gym in an attempt to stationary row my way to fitness glory. I’ve exercised on a fit ball, and fallen off; and exercised with a fit band, and had the doorknob fall off. I bought my own set of weight lifting equipment that would rival an Olympic weightlifter, and ended up with calves that would rival an NRL dummy half.

I once even thought I had finally experienced that surge of endorphins that is supposed to be felt by seriously fit people – that runners ‘high’ I’ve heard about and longed for. But apparently my husband was just sick of my treadmill squeaking and five minutes before I got on it had oiled it to within an inch of its life with WD40... so, alas, that lightheaded dizziness I experienced was because I was inhaling fumes! (I had to have a good lay down after that.)

I suspect that the most exercise I really got from the exercise equipment I bought, was carrying it from the car to the house.

So thank you to all you wonderful, fit, semi fit and people like me (is ‘under fit’ a condition?) who are participating in our Ks for Carers. You never know; you just may have inspired me to dust off those lycra tights, drag out that WHAM sweat shirt, put our Livvy on the record player, and start getting physical.

Debra Cottrell
DEBRA COTTRELL
Chief Executive Officer
Carers Queensland

With a federal election looming in a handful of weeks (and possibly a state election by the end of the year), it’s disheartening to witness the now well-established pattern of spending promises for particular constituencies close to the hearts of the major parties.

Not because there aren’t deserving constituencies; carers certainly fall into that category, but rather that the promises always have the feel of unreality or uncertainty and the realisation that greater spending alone rarely holds the key to real reform.

In so many areas of social service provision, spending in real and relative terms has increased enormously over the past few decades yet measurably better outcomes are hard to find.

Perhaps it is easier to promise a different number than specify a better outcome?

Carers represent an unpaid resource within our society of immense and often unrecognised value.

Helping carers to lead more fulfilling lives is a rare win/win/win; for the individual, the community and the care recipient. Convincing employers that an investment in flexible workplace arrangements to accommodate carers will deliver a real measurable bottom-line dividend; convincing government that support for carers delivers a many multiple dividend in savings in the health and disability sectors; convincing the community that carers go above and beyond on behalf of all of us.

It’s time for an end to a political paradigm which over promises and under delivers and treats the electorate cynically and contemptuously as gullible, self-centred and easily fooled.

We deserve no less and we should demand it in full.

Jim Toohey
JIM TOOHEY
President
Carers Queensland
Thanks to the generosity of Townsville City Council and the North Queensland Cowboy’s “Field of Dreams” program, Carers Queensland were able to provide 25 lucky carers with the opportunity to experience the Cowboy’s first home game of the season for free.

Since it began, the Field of Dreams program has given over 2,800 individuals in the community the opportunity to attend a Cowboys home game at 1300SMILES Stadium. We would like to thank Townsville City Council and the Cowboys for this wonderful experience.

It was fantastic to be able to cheer on the Cowboys and celebrate their first win of the season over Cronulla Sharks and we were very lucky that the rain held off till after the game.

Our carers all had great night as did the staff members who accompanied them.

Dust off your walking shoes and join fellow Queenslanders to walk Ks for Carers!

Ks for Carers is our new fundraising event to raise awareness and vital funds to support our state’s 484,000 unpaid family carers.

Ks for Carers takes place from 10 – 17 June 2016. We’re asking participants to go walking throughout the week and track their Ks for Carers, and/or join us for a group 5K walk on the final day, Friday 17 June.

Walkers can walk as many Ks for Carers as they like, wherever they like, for an entry fee of just $10. They can choose just to pay the entry fee, or can also seek sponsorship. We’re encouraging walkers to track their Ks with a walking app or one of our free pedometers. At the end of the week, we’ll tally up how many Ks Queenslanders have walked for carers!

If you or your friends and family want to take part in Ks for Carers, it’s easy. The entry fee is $10, and can either be paid to your local Carers Queensland office, or you can pay online, through the Just Giving website.

To pay online, go to www.justgiving.com/carers-queensland, where you can either donate $10 directly, or choose to fundraise for us. If you choose to fundraise, search for Ks for Carers and you will be able to set up your own fundraising page (very easy – no technical skill required). You can then can share this page with friends and family to see if they are willing to sponsor you. (Please note that you will have to sponsor yourself $10 to cover your entry fee.)

On your fundraising page, you can share your progress throughout the week, posting photos and updates as you go. Why not set yourself a target number of Ks for the week? Or enter a team and set a team target? It’s a good way to improve your fitness as well as raising money for a very worthy cause.

Each regional office will be hosting a group 5K walk on Friday 17 June to mark the end of the week. We’d love to see as many people as possible enjoying their local walk. Again, entry is $10, payable online or at your regional office. And wear something blue on the day!

Details of Local Walks

Brisbane North – Kedron Brook, commencing at Hickey Park, Stafford

Brisbane South – Minnippi Parklands, 10am commencing at covered picnic table near the car park

Rockhampton – Meet at the Botanical Gardens (kids playground) 6am for a 5km walk and finish with a free BBQ Breakfast for all participants involved over the week at 7am

Toowoomba – Newtown Park, Holberton St, starting at 9:30am

Cairns – A gentle 5 km stroll along the Cairns Esplanade. Starting and finishing at the Pier Shopping Centre Carpark— we will meet at the carpark side of the Police Beat office at 9.15am for a 9.30am start (remember there is free 2 hour parking in underground carpark).

Mackay – Assemble at 9.45 for a 10am start at Willis Street Car Park, Gooseponds, North Mackay.

Ipswich – Meet outside the Brassall Pizza Hut @ 9.30 am and proceed along the Brassall Rail Trail for around 2.5k and then return. We will take in a number of historic sites, sculptures and green scenery.

Townsville – Tony Ireland Stadium, Riverway, Thuringowa 10am

Roma – We will be walking 5kms on the Adungadoo Walkway, starting and finishing at APEX Park at 10am. We will conclude by sharing a light brunch in the park.

South Coast – please refer to Carers Queensland website

Maroochydore – A scenic walk commencing at the Carers Queensland office on the corner of Wrigley and Parker Streets, Maroochydore continuing along the Coastal Walk to Alex Bluff Foreshore and returning for a celebratory morning tea. 9am arrival for 9.30 start time

Hervey Bay – Meet at Hervey Bay Botanical Gardens, Elizabeth St, Urangan, 9.30am

Go Cowboys!

First Magazine - Winter 2016
The ‘R’ Word

Imagine for a moment that you have a child who is sick. They have an illness that can’t be cured, but it can be managed medically, enabling them to have a true quality of life. But you are told that your child can only get the medical care he or she needs if you relinquish their care to the state, waiving your rights as their parent and accepting you may never see them again.

Of course, this situation sounds absurd, as well as inhumane. When our children are unwell, we are lucky to have access to some of the most advanced medical treatments in the world. And we certainly wouldn’t be expected to hand over the care of our child to the state because they had an illness that required long term treatment.

Yet, if you replace a child with an illness in this example with a child with a disability, shockingly, this is the reality for many Australian families. Families who, having had their desperate pleas for support repeatedly rebuffed, find themselves at breaking point and, heartbreakingly, having to relinquish their child to the state in order for their child to receive the support he or she needs.

Relinquishment. The R-word. The dictionary definition of relinquish is ‘voluntarily cease to keep; or to give up’. The problem with this definition is that implies that you have a choice. For families who have been through the trauma of relinquishing their child, they would argue that there was never a choice.

The R word. In the disability world, it’s a dirty word, loaded with guilt, shame and heartache. For Katrina, the guilt and the fear of losing contact with her child kept the single mother desperately struggling to care for a daughter with profound disabilities and behavioural issues for years. “When Emily was 10 years old, her behaviours became, in a word, horrific,” says Katrina. “I was trying to hold down a full time job, as well as managing Emily on my own. This was the first time I felt desperate enough to relinquish her. But the ‘myth’, as I call it, that I'd lose all contact if I did relinquish her terrified me. I felt like I had no choice but to struggle on.”

It’s well-known that families with children with disability do not get the support they need, when they need it. Without support some families reach crisis point. This crisis can result in relinquishment, where families surrender the day-to-day care of their children to the state. To relinquish a child with a disability, parents must take their child to a government office or refuse to collect them from school, hospital or respite. It is estimated that 12 children are relinquished in Queensland every year, although exact figures aren’t known.

The long term impacts of relinquishment can be devastating. Relinquished children experience
trauma, grief, fear and confusion. Relinquishment has severe impacts on families, such as trauma, anxiety, guilt, shame, and family and health breakdown.

It is these feelings that a new theatre production about relinquishment is aiming to explore. **Thread** is the second in a series of plays called *Let’s Speak of the Unspoken*. **Thread** tells the story of a mother and father in a hospital waiting room. The mother has just been physically attacked by her teenage son who has a disability, and for the first time, she suggests that they relinquish their son right there, at the hospital.

What follows is a dialogue that goes full circle – love (‘How is there an us without him?’); anger (‘Why won’t somebody help us?’); denial (‘We’re okay’); blame (‘You’re asking me to choose?’); guilt (‘We’d be giving up’); and then love again (‘He’s my son.’). Two anguished parents full of fear, devoid of hope, too scared to say the one thing that they need to say – the R word.

**Thread**’s writer is Emma Workman, a playwright with over 10 years of experience working as a disability support worker. “In that time, I met amazing families dealing with scenarios I can’t even imagine,” says Workman. “My aim with this series of plays is to raise the issues that get swept under the carpet because our lives are so busy.”

When researching the play, Workman found it incredibly difficult to find families who were willing to share their experiences of relinquishing a child. “The families I did speak to found it very challenging to talk to me. In one instance, the father pulled out of meeting me, and the next time it was the mother. They were still reeling from the trauma of relinquishing their child, which was perfectly understandable.” With this in mind, a lot of the play’s content is based upon Workman’s own observations of working with families, as well as the limited amount of academic research available. Workman purposely creates theatre to educate as opposed to entertain. “My hope for the play is that it gets a conversation started. If it raises awareness of this trauma that families out there are struggling with, then the play has done its job.”

Katrina is ready to talk about her experience of relinquishment. She eventually relinquished Emily when she was 17 years old. “She was in respite when I relinquished her. I told them that I was planning to do it, and she actually handled it really well. I was a mess though. The guilt ate away at me for a long time.”

Emily is now happily settled in a house with two other women. “She’s an outdoor girl, and gets the opportunity to be out and about often. She’s also 21 going on 13 – she’s developed a real girly streak, completely different to her mother, and she loved getting her hair done. She comes home every second weekend, and I can honestly say she is a joy to be around.”

Despite the trauma of relinquishment, Katrina has no regrets. “I get to be Emily’s mum, and not a carer. She was ready to move on – we both were – and I now have more energy to fight for her. As a parent going through this, you have to be strong. I’ve fought to make sure I’m still involved in all decisions about her care, and will continue to fight every step of the way to make sure she gets a better future.”
Autism Health Hub

The Autism CRC Health Hub aims to provide adults on the autism spectrum, their carers, their families and health professionals with up-to-date, evidence-based health and well-being resources. The first in a range of informational resources are now available on their website.

The interventions and outcomes developed for the Health Hub are being informed by the longitudinal study of adults with autism, which is tracking over four years the physical and mental health, well-being, life roles, time use, satisfaction, employment, community access and participation of adults.

Visit www.autismcrc.com.au/health-hub to learn more about the Health Hub and download current resources.

Life after Better Start

Carers Queensland is running two free workshops in June, called Moving Forward, for parents of children who receive Better Start funding. The workshops will outline options for children as they prepare for school and give details about services parents can access when funding finishes due to the roll out of the NDIS.

Workshop Dates

Fri 10 June 2016, 9:30am - 2:30pm
– Redcliffe Library
  476 Oxley Ave Redcliffe

Wed 22 June 2016, 9:30am - 2:30pm
– Caboolture East State School
  44 Manley St, Caboolture

To reserve your spot, contact Michelle O’Sullivan on 3624 1700.

More workshops will be held in the coming months. Details will be available on our website: carersqld.asn.au/services/disability/better-start

NDIS Roll Out Announced

From 1 July 2016 the National Disability Insurance Scheme, also called the NDIS, will begin full roll out across Queensland.

In the first year the NDIS roll out will continue across the Townsville area, west to Mount Isa and up to the gulf; in the Mackay area and out to Whitsundays; and in Toowoomba and areas west.

Between July 2017 and June 2018, the NDIS will roll out in the greater Ipswich area; Bundaberg; and Rockhampton, Gladstone and areas west.

And finally, from July 2018, the NDIS will roll out to the remaining areas in the state including:
• Logan and Redlands
• Cairns and far north Queensland
• Suburbs of Brisbane
• Fraser Coast and Burnett
• Gold Coast area
• Moreton Bay region and
• Sunshine Coast up to Gympie.

Eligible people currently receiving support through the Queensland Government will be moving to the NDIS alongside new participants in each of the areas. Existing Commonwealth and state based supports will continue until you are covered by the NDIS.

The NDIS will be operating state-wide by July 2019, ultimately providing support to more than 90,000 people.
Medical alarms and the nbn™ network

Do you or the person you care for have a medical alarm?

If so, you will need to check its compatibility with the nbn™ network when it is due to roll out in your area. The nbn is Australia’s new landline phone and internet network, designed to give Australians access to fast and reliable phone and internet services. The nbn™ network will replace most of the existing landline phone and internet networks. It also involves new technologies, which some existing devices may not be compatible with.

Most medical alarms are connected to your phone line – so they can call for help if you need it. As the nbn™ network is replacing most existing landline phone and internet networks in your area, some important services may not stay working.

What you need to do

If you have a medical alarm, autodialler or emergency call button, it is essential that you register your alarm with nbn online or call 1800 227 300. This will help to identify homes where support may be needed to help minimise a break in service when the existing network is switched off.

Call your medical alarm, autodialler or emergency call button provider for advice before moving to the nbn™ network.

Questions you could ask your provider

• Will my alarm work properly when connected to the nbn™ network?
• Will my alarm be able to dial out during a power outage when connected to the nbn™ network?
• What alternatives are there to using a landline connection?

CARE Program

Did you know that, as a financial member of Carers Queensland, you have full access to a great range of deals and discounts through The CARE Program?

Here are some of the latest deals on offer:

Cheaper Electricity

Are you one of the 75% of households paying too much for electricity?

Make It Cheaper compare prices from their panel of Australian energy retailers to see if you could save hundreds of dollars on your energy bills. All you need to do is send them your current bill – their service is free, and they do the rest. Join the 200,000 Australian families who have already switched to a cheaper deal with them today.

Send your bill to careprogram@makeitcheaper.com.au or call 02 8880 4318 to speak to their experts directly.

Unfortunately this offer is only available in South East Queensland (Hervey Bay – South; West to Gatton) due to the existing electricity supplier network in place in Northern Queensland.

Frequent Values

Your Carers Queensland membership card gives you full access to Frequent Values, a membership program with over 4,500 offers at retail and leisure outlets. Current deals (May 2016) include:

• 50% off at Mantra, Breakfree and Peppers resorts – year-round availability
• 25% off one pair of glasses worth $149 or more at Specsavers
• 30% off domestic and 25% off international travel insurance with QBE
• 20% discount on your bill at 275 Queensland restaurants

Browse these deals by logging in to carersqld.frequent-values.com.au with your surname and membership number.

Low-rate loans

Online finance broker 360 Finance are able to offer members a low rate asset finance deal that is unmatched anywhere else.

Contact them on 1300 361 360 for an obligation-free quote today.

InTouch Direct

5% off general medical consumables, including pads and personal care items. Call 1300 134 260.
Recently I was in Sydney hosting, with my colleagues from Carers NSW, Carers Victoria and Carers Australia, an information stall at the 2016 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day. I had a day to spare I decided to take a trip down memory lane.

As I wandered up Oxford Street to Paddington and meandered through King Street, Newtown I was struck by the changes to the streetscape and lamented the lack of an overt gay streetscape. It seemed to me that the haunts of my younger days had all but disappeared. Newtown was where we socialised, met up with friends, enjoyed a late night dinner at our favourite café, browsed the bookshops, celebrated the lives of friends no longer with us and discussed politics. Newtown was where we felt not only safe but included. Shops that displayed the pink triangle or (later) the rainbow flag not only indicated that they were places of refuge but that the people within those establishments welcomed our presence, our custom and our company. Newtown was where my partner and I socialised with our children, knowing that our children were safe from bigotry and abuse. That was 22 years ago and a lot has changed since then.

Attended by 80,000 people the Mardi Gras Fair Day is an opportunity for people to celebrate diversity in an inclusive, safe environment. Over 300 people attended our Supporting Carers stall seeking information about carer support services and assistance with locating and accessing disability and aged care services.

Listening to the stories of the visitors to our stall and watching the passing parade of people (families with young children, multi-generational families, couples, older people using mobility aids, younger people) I reflected on the wisdom of the stallholder who quietly pointed out that, in his opinion, the overt use of gay symbolism in our society had decreased proportionate to the increased recognition of, and respect for, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI). And so my brain began to synthesize...

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that 2.7 million Australians, or 1 in 9 of the population, provide care and support to another individual because of chronic or life-limiting illness, mental health issues, disability or frailty. Similarly, it is estimated that 2,530,000 people identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex. It is unsurprising then that approximately one in four people who identify as LGBTI also identify as a carer, having caring responsibilities for a child, partner, parent, family or friend with a chronic or life-limiting illness, mental health issues, disability or frailty.

’Sohowwhat!’ I hear you say, ‘How do these two issues relate?’ Let me explain...

Driven by dogged activism the last 38 years has witnessed significant social change for the LGBTI community. Courageous individuals, LGBTI advocacy groups, businesses, academic research and public celebrations such as Mardi Gras are the vehicles through which the LGBTI voice has been broadcast and social change ultimately embraced. These vehicles have, over time, maintained the motivation, cementing earlier achievements whilst championing new issues. The Mardi Gras Parade is no longer a protest march but a celebration of diversity.

The journey towards carer recognition, respect and inclusion in Australia is not that dissimilar. It was resolute determination of a small group of older carers lead by Val French, Fred Hillier and others that secured Commonwealth funding to establish the Queensland Council of Carers in 1989. Nationally that same determination witnessed the establishment of Carer Associations across the country; the introduction of carer recognition legislation in each of the states and territories and the Commonwealth and the inclusion of carers as a ‘special needs groups’ in both community care and aged care legislation.

Like the Mardi Gras Parade, Carers Day and Carers Week is our showcase opportunity. It may not enjoy the same flamboyance or media coverage as the Parade but the purpose is the same – to celebrate our contribution to our families and community (and let’s not forget the economy). Like Mardi Gras, Carers Week also serves a political purpose: to campaign for greater recognition and respect and a genuine increase in carer support services. And like the LGBTI sector we also have businesses that champion our cause. The Carers Queensland Carer-Friendly Business Awards, for example, highlights businesses that recognise, respect and support carers, either in their capacity as an employee or a customer. Businesses that go the extra mile.

So why, if there has been so much change, are carers still struggling, sacrificing their physical, mental, emotional and financial health? Australia’s contemporary social policy with respect to carers is both complex and contradictory. The policy reinforces a welfare ideology which places the moral imperative on families to assume the caring role, normalising the role of family and friend carers as providers of community care. Yet on the other hand, it promotes a philosophy of user choice but fails to offer carers real choice over whether or not to accept or continue to provide unpaid care. So caring remains invisible work, work that happens behind closed doors and out of the public domain. Because it is relatively invisible, so are carers.

What’s the issue here? I’ll use an example to illustrate to the paradox. My great niece and her partner are intelligent, articulate women in their 20s who, in the last nine months, have assumed an active caring role of their elderly grandfather (my brother-in-law). As I listen to the young women bemoan their chronic tiredness, lack of time, the juggling of competing demands and work and raising their young family, the paradox becomes clear. As young women they are confident with their sexual identity and with the rainbow flag at the ready, they demand equality and public recognition. As carers they feel invisible, so are carers.

Carers Day and Carers Week are significant opportunities to engage with community and political stakeholders in answering the question ‘How do the two issues relate?’ So why, if there has been so much change, are carers still struggling, sacrificing their physical, mental, emotional and financial health? Australia’s contemporary social policy with respect to carers provides one answer. The policy reinforces a welfare ideology which places the moral imperative on families to assume the caring role, normalising the role of family and friend carers as providers of community care. Yet on the other hand, it promotes a philosophy of user choice but fails to offer carers real choice over whether or not to accept or continue to provide unpaid care. So caring remains invisible work, work that happens behind closed doors and out of the public domain. Because it is relatively invisible, so are carers.

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From a different but equally legitimate perspective some older people who identify as LGBTI or care for an older person who identifies as LGBTI have memories of enforced medical treatment, incarceration, victimisation and discrimination that understandably hinder them from seeking services to support them in their caring role. Recent research from La Trobe University show that 43% older carers who identify as LGBTI or care for a person who identifies as LGBTI have experienced discrimination, and 28% had delayed accessing services because of the fear of discrimination, victimisation, marginalisation or rejection. For different reasons to
my great niece and her partner, they continue to provide care and support with little or no timely support from formal services.

Minimizing difference is used by many ‘marginalised people’ who have been hurt by society. A survival or coping strategy, minimizing difference makes other people comfortable because it allays the anxieties of the mainstream population but comes at a personal cost to those who practice the strategy. What we are minimizing is not our social identity but the stereotype that it carries! Minimising also adds fuel to the stereotype. Similarly, in marginalising or minimising our need for support our caring work and contribution remains invisible and unacknowledged.

So what can carers learn from the LGBTI movement?

Recognised internationally the rainbow flag is a symbol of the LGBTI social movement, LGBTI pride, support and inclusion. The rainbow tick indicates businesses and organisations (such as sporting clubs) which have committed resources to develop and implement LGBTI inclusive policies and practices and positive attitudes towards diversity. Love it or loathe it, the rainbow flag is a universal symbol.

Given the success of the rainbow flag, do carers need their own flag to wave and carer tick of approval to display? Do carers need a national symbol that is recognised by people with a caring role? Do businesses and organisations need a symbol that indicates to carers that the establishment behind the glass wall has carer inclusive policies and practices? Ones that translate into genuine care about our concerns, respect for our expert knowledge and value our role and contribution to our family and society? Do we need to dance in the street? We could but most of us would have neither the time nor the energy. We have research, lots of research, about who carers are, about caring, about how long the caring role lasts and about the impact of caring – on ourselves, our economy and our livelihoods.

Every new success we achieve builds upon earlier success creating positive social change but our world is not perfect. There is still much to be done. A friend of mine reckons ‘carers need a hero’. Who does she mean by hero? Individuals, working together who can turn the findings of research into action. Individuals who will advocate for increased recognition of, and respect for people with caring roles and services that genuinely meet the needs of carers. People who will, in bite-sized pieces, help to make a difference for carers and offer a helping hand. Hero or otherwise, we don’t come into our roles as blank slates. We carry with us our social identities: carer, former carer, young carer, spousal carer, older parent carer, straight, same-sex attracted, transgender, gender questioning, Christian, Muslim, African, Latino and so the list goes on.

As the crowd thins and we begin to dismantle our information stall I reflect on the theme of Mardi Gras this year – Momentum. Momentum – working together to create change; change that builds on the successes of our elders and contemporaries, change that will resonate beyond the boundaries and shine as a beacon of hope to others. As we bid farewell to our colleagues I pay my respects to, and applaud, my elders and heroes; those who stood proud and championed change for people like me and with the Momentum baton and hero cape in hand, turn my thoughts to work tomorrow.

Sarah Walbank
Policy and Research Officer
Member of the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Ageing and Aged Care Strategy Working Group
Having trouble coping? Stressed out? Feeling overwhelmed?
If your answer is YES, you are not alone. Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Many carers, however, say that they feel stressed most of the time. While stress isn’t always bad, too much stress can affect your well-being.

What causes stress?
Stress comes up when you feel like the demands of a situation or event are too much to manage. It can come up with everyday situations, and in response to a specific event or situation. Both positive and negative life events can be stressful, especially those that involve major changes to your regular routines. Here are some examples:
- Changes in a relationship – e.g. becoming a carer for a loved one
- Changes in housing arrangements
- The death of a family member or friend
- Losing a job or other source of income

As stress is based on the way you see a situation or event, things that cause stress are based on your own situation. Different people may find that different things are stressful.

How you feel when issues come up can also affect the way you experience stress.

If you feel well and in control, a problem may not seem very stressful. However, if you already feel stressed or overwhelmed, the same problem may add to your existing stress and feel very overwhelming.

Are you experiencing signs of stress?
Stress can affect your body, your behaviours, your feelings and your thoughts. Here are common signs of stress:
- **Changes in your body**
  - Tense muscles
  - Rapid breathing and heart rate
  - Headaches
  - Difficulties sleeping well
  - Fatigue
- **Changes in your behaviours**
  - Withdrawing from others
  - Fidgeting, feeling restless
  - Smoking, drinking or using more drugs than usual
  - Avoiding situations that you think are stressful
- **Changes in your feelings**
  - Feeling worried or confused
- **Changes in your thoughts**
  - Struggling to concentrate, remember or make decisions
  - Losing your self-confidence
  - Having a negative attitude towards yourself and your life

Why does stress make me feel so awful?
At times, stress can have a negative effect on the basic dimensions of health (your thoughts, emotions, behaviours and body reactions). Stress is more likely to have a negative impact on your health if you feel threatened or at risk of danger or loss. Stress may also affect your health if you use unhealthy behaviours to cope. The negative effects of stress on your wellness can become a source of stress in and of themselves.

Stress and Illness
Your stress levels and your coping skills can also influence your physical health. Higher levels of stress can increase the risk of illness. For example, you’re more likely to catch a cold or the flu when you’re coping with high levels of stress.
There is also evidence that stress can aggravate disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis, insulin-dependent diabetes, multiple sclerosis and more. Some of the connections between stress and illness are determined by the ways you cope with stress.

Coping with stress

There is no right or wrong way to cope with stress. What works for one person may not work for another, and what works in one situation may not work in another situation. Below, you will find common ways to cope with stress and maintain wellness.

Focus on what you can do — there is usually something you can do to manage stress in most situations.

Resist the urge to give up or run away from problems — these coping choices often make stress worse in the long run.

Manage your emotions — feelings of sadness, anger or fear are common when coping with stress.

Try not to bottle your emotions up. Try expressing your feelings by talking or writing them down.

Try not to lash out at other people. Yelling or swearing usually pushes people away when you need them the most.

Many of the coping strategies listed below are useful ways of managing your emotions.

Seek out support — seeking social support from other people is helpful — especially when you feel you can’t cope on your own. Family, friends, co-workers and health professionals can all be important sources of support.

Accept help with daily tasks and responsibilities, such as chores or child care.

Get emotional support from someone who understands you and cares about you.

Focus on the positives. This is one of the hardest things to do when coping with stress. At times, it can seem impossible. Dwelling on the negatives often adds to your stress and takes away your motivation to make things better.

Focus on strengths rather than weaknesses — remind yourself that no one is perfect.

Look for the challenges in a situation by asking, “What can I learn from this?” or, “How can I grow as a person?”

Try to keep things in perspective

Try to keep a sense of humour

Remind yourself you are doing the best you can given the circumstances.

Make a plan of action

Problem-solving around aspects of a situation that you can control is one of the most effective ways to lower your stress.

Try breaking a stressful problem into manageable chunks. Think about the best way to approach the problem. You may decide to put other tasks on hold to concentrate on the main problem, or you may decide to wait for the right time and place to act.

Identify and define the problem. Determine your goal and brainstorm possible solutions, considering the pros and cons of each possible solution. Then choose the best solution for you — the perfect solution rarely exists.

Put your plan into action, and then evaluate your efforts, choosing another strategy, if needed.

Self-Care

Taking good care of yourself can be difficult during stressful times, but self-care can help you cope with problems more effectively. The trick to self-care is to look for little things you can do everyday to help yourself feel well.

Here are some self-care activities to try:

Eat healthy foods and drink lots of water throughout the day to maintain your energy.

Try to exercise or do something active on a regular basis.

Try to avoid using alcohol or drugs as a way to cope.

Explore relaxation techniques like meditation or yoga.

Spend time on things you enjoy, such as hobbies or other activities.

Try to get a good night’s sleep.

Take care of your relationships — family, friends and co-workers can be affected by your stress — and they can also be part of the problem. Keep the feelings and needs of others in mind when coping with stress, but balance them with your own.

Be assertive about your needs rather than aggressive or passive. Being assertive means expressing your needs without hurting others. Try not to confront others in a mean-spirited or antagonizing manner, and accept responsibility, apologise or try to put things right when appropriate.

Acceptance

There may be times when you can’t change something. This can be the most challenging aspect of coping with stress. Sometimes, all you can do is manage your distress or grief.

Denying that the problem exists may prolong your suffering and interfere with your ability to take action. Acceptance is a process that takes time. You may need to remind yourself to be patient. Death, illness, major losses or major life changes can be particularly difficult to accept. Try not to get caught up in wishful thinking or dwell on what could have been.

Distraction

Distraction can be helpful when coping with short-term stress you can’t control, such as reading a magazine while getting dental work done. Distraction can be harmful if it stops you from taking action on things you can control, such as watching TV when you have school or work deadlines to meet.

You can do many things to take your mind off problems, such as: daydreaming; going for a drive or walk; leisure activities, exercise, hobbies; housework, yard work or gardening; watching TV or movies; spending time with friends or family; spending time with pets; surfing the Internet or sending e-mail; sleeping or taking a short nap.

When used for short periods of time, many of these forms of distraction create opportunities to take a break and refuel — an important part of self-care.

If you feel like you can’t cope, try these options

Talk to someone that cares about you. They may be able to provide help and support.

Seek professional help as early as possible. Talk to your family doctor or mental health care provider, or visit a drop-in clinic or the hospital emergency room.

Call the Carers Advisory Service on 1800 242 636.

This article is extracted from www.heretohelp.bc.ac © Copyright – Canadian Mental Health Association (BC Division) for and on behalf of the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information.
Are you an eligible Young Carer?

✅ Do you provide care and support to a family member or friend with an illness, disability, mental health illness, is frail aged or has an alcohol or other drug problem?
✅ Will you be aged 12-25 years in 2017?
✅ Are you currently studying or wishing to return to study or training?
✅ Not in receipt of another bursary or scholarship
✅ A permanent resident or Australian citizen

You may be eligible to apply for a young carer bursary

About the Bursaries
> 333 bursaries will be granted in 2017.
> Each bursary is $3,000.
> The money can be spent on whatever helps you with your education or training.

How do you apply for a 2017 bursary?
> Applications open on 2 August and close on 14 September 2016.
> Go to bursaries.youngcarers.net.au to find out more and apply online.

Further information
For further information contact ycbursaries@carersaustralia.com.au or ring 1800 756 238

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.
Astrid recently accompanied her husband Paul on a month long overseas holiday that was prompted by him wanting to tick some items off his bucket list. Paul was diagnosed in July 2014 at the age of 52 with younger onset dementia. He has Posterior Cortical Atrophy, a rare form of Alzheimer’s Disease that affects the back of the brain first. Visual information is not processed correctly leading to problems with spatial awareness, depth perception, recognition of objects as well as literacy, numeracy, speech difficulties and cognitive decline.

Here are Astrid’s tips for travelling with a person who has dementia:

If travel is still on the bucket list of the person with dementia and you as their carer are willing, then go as early in the diagnosis as you can so that abilities are maximised.

Discuss your travel plans with your loved one’s medical professionals as they will have more specific advice and can discuss with you whether it is a good idea or not based on abilities and individual circumstances.

As the carer, be prepared to do everything for two. It’s not easy and the focus will be on still caring for your loved one even though you want to just be a tourist too. Caring while travelling is extra challenging as you both are away from familiar routines and support.

That means making sure you build in down time for yourself to recharge your batteries. It’s important to enlist the help of family and friends you may be visiting to give you and your loved one some valuable respite time.

If you are travelling with other family and friends, ensure they also take responsibility for caring so you can have a break.

Get plenty of sleep and be prepared to change plans to suit how your loved one is going. Get familiar with gauging moods or feelings as the trip progresses so that anxiety is minimised. Allow plenty of time for activities and getting to places.

Consider guided tours as they mean a lot of the organising is done for you.

Speak with your travel agent to book as much of the trip and activities in advance as possible to minimise doing this yourself on arrival.

Ensure you consider travel insurance and find a policy that meets your situation.

Ensure your loved one has some identification and details of where they are staying for the entire trip. Have contact phone numbers and some simple descriptors of how best to help your loved one written down too.

Keep a photo of your loved one with you for easy identification if you get separated.

Ensure you have enough medications for the entire trip.

Take a doctor’s letter outlining the diagnosis and enquire as to whether there are discounts or 2 for 1 offers or special consideration when visiting tourist attractions and organising transport. Disability passes and/or “cut the queue” tickets may be available for you as the companion and your loved one.

Pack light so that luggage is not a big problem.

Use wheeled luggage for easier manoeuvrability.

Keep a journal to help record how your loved one is doing during the trip.

Give lots of reassurance and encourage loved ones to still do as much for themselves as they can. It’s easy to rush in and want to do things for them but try and resist this and give them time to complete tasks that just may require a bit more time.

Ensure there are special treats for both of you on the trip so that everyone is glad the trip happened.

Build in time at the end of the trip for you to recover fully before returning to work or other routines.

Get both of you involved in preparing a memory album of the trip on your return by recording anecdotes and stories to accompany photos and souvenirs collected. This will be a useful prompting tool down the track to reminisce and recollect memories of the trip.

Further reading

Alzheimer’s Australia, Caring for someone with dementia, pamphlet 8, Travelling. Available from the website http://fightdementia.org.au

Astrid & Paul
Are you a carer who has experienced amazing customer service this year?
Or are you working for a business that demonstrates their understanding of your role as a family carer?

It’s that time of year again when we ask for your nominations for our Carer-Friendly Business Awards. The Carer-Friendly Business Awards recognise local businesses, employees and employers who go the extra mile to support Queensland carers.

Every year, we ask carers across Queensland to nominate a local business, employee, service provider or employer who is deserving of recognition for their exceptional service or carer-friendly employment practices.

Last year’s winners include a Rockhampton hairdresser who provides an after-hours service for an autistic teenager; an employer who gave unwavering support to his employee whose wife has Motor Neurone Disease; and an 81 year old support worker nominated as a great employee for her work supporting a woman who has Down Syndrome.

There are four Business Award Categories:

• **Great Employer** – recognises a business that employs a carer, and it is the carer who usually nominates them. The business provides flexible working arrangements, supports alternative work arrangements and has established policies or practices in place to support staff to balance work and the caring role.

• **Great Employee** – for employees of a company or service provider that goes the extra mile in helping carers.

• **Great Service** – recognises a mainstream business, not directly associated with the health and community care services sector, that understands the time constraints of carers and their mobility needs.

• **Great Service Provider** – acknowledges registered service providers and not-for-profit organisations that go ‘above and beyond’ in their services for carers.

If you know a local business or employer who deserves to win this award, we’d love to hear from you. Regional winners will be announced at regional events as part of Carers Week celebrations in October. State winners and the carer who nominated them are invited to attend the Carers Week Gala Launch in Brisbane on 17 October 2016.

Nominations for each award will be assessed comparatively and on merit.

To enter, complete the nomination form opposite and post it to:

**CFBA**
Carers Queensland
PO Box 179
Holland Park QLD 4121


Nominations close on Monday 15 August 2016.
Carer-Friendly Business Awards Nomination Form

Your Details
Your name: Phone Number:
Your address:
Town/City/Suburb: Postcode:
Email:

Are you a young carer (aged 15-25 years)? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Tell us about the business or person you are nominating
Name of business:
Name of person (if you are nominating an employee):
Owner / Manager / Other Contact: Phone number:
Street address of business:
Town / City / Suburb: Postcode:

What products and / or service does this business provide?

Which category are you nominating for?
[ ] Great Employer [ ] Great Employee [ ] Great Service [ ] Great Service Provider

How does this business or person go the extra mile for you and the person you care for? (Please be detailed and specific with this answer and use an extra sheet of paper if required. For example – ‘Mary works for a financial institution. Mary’s son has a heart condition and requires ongoing treatment. Her employer provides flexible work hours and her manager recently organised a fundraiser so Mary could have some extra support in the home.’)

What are the positive impacts this has had on your role as a carer?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this nomination.
Contact Carers Queensland

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Gold Coast
1/24 Cotton Street, Nerang | 5596 5726

Hervey Bay
8/19-21 Torquay Road, Pialba | 4124 0922

Ipswich
1-2/16 Lowry Street | 3202 1852

Mackay
19 Palmer Street | 4944 0544

Rockhampton
1/83 West Street | 4921 4486

Roma
144 McDowall Street | 4622 1270

Sunshine Coast
1/10 Wrigley Street, Maroochydore | 5451 1882

Toowoomba
907 Ruthven Street | 4635 8379

Townsville
210 Ross River Road, Aitkenvale | 4725 8853

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre
1800 052 222

FIRST magazine is Carers Queensland Inc.’s quarterly magazine for members. We invite all carers to submit stories, articles and images for publication. Contributions may be edited for space reasons. Please email all submissions to – hcarter@carersqld.asn.au

Printed by Snap Underwood, a 100% Indigenous Owned business.

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