

## **BUSINESS PLAN**

### **SSRG Working Carers Project Pilot Site**

#### **1) Background**

A carer is someone who is providing ongoing support to a family member or friend who has a disability or illness and can not live independently without assistance.

The person may have a physical or intellectual disability, a chronic illness, mental illness, terminal condition or the person may be frail aged.

- In Australia one in eight people are providing care<sup>1</sup>
- 2.9 million people are carers
- During every persons lifetime they will likely either be a carer or need a carer<sup>2</sup>
- The unpaid work that carers provide is estimated to be saving the government \$40 billion per year<sup>3</sup>
- The majority of carers are aged between 35 and 54 years
- The majority of carers are skilled and experienced members of the workforce
- Middle aged women shoulder most of the elder care<sup>4</sup>
- Middle aged women are expected to meet labour force shortages
- Many people do not formally identify themselves as carers and are referred to as 'hidden carers'<sup>5</sup>

Carers in the workplace are often unaware they are carers (hidden carers). The research suggests that predominantly middle aged women (skilled and experienced workers) are shouldering most of the aged care plus there is pressure for them to stay in the workforce to alleviate the skilled workforce shortage. They are facing the issue of juggling paid employment with their caring responsibilities.

In broad terms, 80% of the labour force growth to 2016 will be by people who are aged over 45 years and workers over 55 is expected to increase from 10% in 1998 to 15% by 2016.

#### **2) Project Description**

A resource has been developed to raise awareness in the workplace about working carers and where carers can access services to better manage their caring role. The resource package will be aimed at both employer and employee. It consists of a power point, DVD, employer information booklet and employee information brochure and poster. An evaluation tool – qualitative process – will be used to gauge the success of the package.

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<sup>1</sup> Carers Australia, report by Access Economics Pty Ltd, The economic value of informal care in 2010

<sup>2</sup> Carers Australia, 2004 Carer Education Course

<sup>3</sup> Carers Australia, report by Access Economics Pty Ltd, The economic value of informal care in 2010

<sup>4</sup> Alison Page et al, 2009 Taking care: Mature age workers with elder care responsibilities, background briefing paper

<sup>5</sup> Working Carers Gateway [www.workingcarers.org.au/.../869-finding-the-hidden-carers-editorial](http://www.workingcarers.org.au/.../869-finding-the-hidden-carers-editorial)

An initial training session will be delivered to HR and management staff to assist with introducing the information into the workplace. Information brochures and posters aimed at employees have been designed to be distributed and assist with promoting carer awareness, accessing services and managing the caring role.

### **3) Project Objectives**

The objective is to pilot the working carers information resource at 2 sites within ECH, providing information to all staff to promote carer awareness and management of the caring role.

Outcomes would include the following:

- Self identification of working carers in the workplace
- Knowledge about carer services and support
- Employers to be supportive and understanding of working carers
- Co workers to be supportive and understanding of working carers
- Adherence / demonstrating a proactive approach to the Carers Charter and National Carer Legislation

### **4) Staff and Organisational Impact**

The desired impact of using the working carers resource is to create a supportive and positive workplace. Carer friendly workplaces reflect the following organisational benefits:

- Loyal staff who are flexible in their work approach
- Staff who are willing to ‘give’ to their organisation as well as benefit from management’s flexibility
- Retention of skilled and experienced staff
- Staff who have learnt through their caring experience to be well organised, strategic and resourceful

The potential long term impact is reduced sick leave, work cover and ultimately better staff retention. Interestingly, the research conducted by Carer Support found that on average carers stayed longer with the organisation than non carers - this was partly attributed to job security, flexi time and the ability to change work days.<sup>6</sup>

Another likely benefit is the identification of hidden carers – people who are unaware they are carers and are not receiving any support services. It can be argued that a preventative approach is best to avoid a negative impact on carer health and wellbeing. Carer Health and Wellbeing is directly related to the amount of support received.<sup>7</sup>

The introduction of the resource package will involve a training session delivered by Southern Services Reform Group (SSRG) representatives. Attendees to the training would include HR department staff and managers. Material for employees on carer awareness and managing the caring role will be supplied by the SSRG for distribution to staff members.

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<sup>6</sup> Carer Support, Working Carers Project Adelaide, South Australia 2010

<sup>7</sup> Cummins, R. The Australian Wellbeing Index, 2007

This may have some impact on managers as they may need to be supportive of staff that identify themselves as being in a caring role.

## 5) Financial Impact

The SSRG will provide the training session and resources at no cost to the organisation.

An in-depth evaluation will take place to investigate the outcomes of the project at no financial cost to the organisation. The long term outcomes anticipated, as stated above, are reduced sick leave, work cover and ultimately better staff retention which would have an overall positive financial impact for the organisation.

## 6) Legislative Requirements

State and National Carer legislation has been developed to promote the recognition and support of carers. This legislation creates the carer recognition framework.

**“The *Carer Recognition Act 2010* formally acknowledges the significant contribution that carers make to the Australian community.”**<sup>8</sup> Ten principles guide the framework and include the following:

- The valuable social and economic contribution that carers make should be recognised and supported.
- Carers should be supported to achieve greater economic wellbeing and sustainability and, where appropriate, should have opportunities to participate in employment and education.

The South Australian Carers Charter (Carers Recognition Act, 2005) states that carers should be recognised and valued for their important contribution to the Australian community. It also states that carers should be supported in balancing their own needs with their caring role, be entitled to participate in community life, employment and education. They should expect to have the same rights and choices as the rest of the community, including support by individuals, business, community organisations and public institutions.<sup>9</sup>

It is unlawful for anyone to be treated unfairly because of their caring role (South Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984).<sup>10</sup>

## 7) Summary

In summary, the Working Carers Pilot Project is an innovative approach to promoting better staff health and wellbeing and positioning the organisation as an ‘employer of choice’.

The project aims to encourage carer awareness of both employer and employee and includes strategies to manage the caring role. It is envisaged that the qualitative

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/news/2010/Pages/carers\\_recognition\\_bill\\_2010\\_passed.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/news/2010/Pages/carers_recognition_bill_2010_passed.aspx)

<sup>9</sup> [www.sa.gov.au/upload/franchise/Community%20Support/Final%20Carers%20Charter.pdf](http://www.sa.gov.au/upload/franchise/Community%20Support/Final%20Carers%20Charter.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.eoc.sa.gov.au/>

evaluation process will provide the evidence to 'roll out' the resource throughout the southern region and wider.