



Report on the Profile of Carers in Tasmania

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Executive Summary

Carers Tasmania exists to support the thousands of Tasmanians who provide informal care to family members or friends requiring assistance because they have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail. In 2008, Carers Tasmania contracted the consultants IMC-link to produce a report on carers in Tasmania, to assist them in planning and targeting their services, and in advocating on behalf of carers. The following terms of reference were agreed:

Terms of Reference

1. Report on the profile of Carers nationally.
2. Report on the profile of Carers in Tasmania.
3. Project the future demand for informal care in Tasmania in 2028.
4. Evaluate the Effect of Carers on the Tasmanian economy now and in 2028.
5. Evaluate the Social contribution of Carers to Tasmania.

Methods

The following methodologies were used:

1. Review of the national and international literature on Carers.
2. A survey of 161 Carers Tasmania clients.
3. Access Economics (2005) methodology to calculate replacement and opportunity costs of care provision by friends and family members.
4. Direct age standardisation methods to estimate future demand.
5. Social contributions were evaluated within the theoretical framework of social capital literature, and impacts of both carers and the activities of Carers Tasmania were considered.

The National Experience

Nationally, in 2003, the ABS Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers estimated 2.6 million Australians were providing some assistance to people requiring help because of disability or age. That is, 12.9% of the total population were carers. In 2005, Access Economics estimated the total replacement cost of such care at over \$30 billion.

Adopting a caring role is not without personal cost. Carers are significantly worse off than the general population in regards to income, health and wellbeing, employment and social interactions. Carers:

- are nearly twice as likely as non-carers to live in households in the two lowest income quintiles.
- have the lowest personal wellbeing index of any group yet studied.

- are more than eight times as likely as the general population to suffer from depression.
- are 19% less likely than non-carers to be employed.
- have reduced social networks, and are 1.46 times more likely to have low face to face contact with family and friends outside their own household.

The Tasmanian Experience

Tasmanians are slightly more likely than other Australians to provide informal care. The 2003 SDAC estimated 19,600 or 14.8% of Tasmanians were Carers. Most Carers Tasmania clients are primary carers and provide very intensive care (more than 40 hours per week). It is apparent from our survey results that Carers Tasmania services are accessed by those carers most adversely affected by caring and thus in most need of help.

The Future of Informal Care

As Tasmania's population ages, demand for informal care is projected to increase rapidly, outstripping the supply of informal carers. By 2028, the number of people in Tasmania requiring assistance with a core activity of daily life is projected to increase by 47%-52%, while the ratio of carers to people requiring assistance is projected to decrease by 23%-24%. It should be noted that this result assumes that the propensity to care is independent of the rate of disability. If an increase in the proportion of people with a relative in need of care translates into an increase in the proportion providing it, the number of carers in Tasmania in 2028 may well exceed our projections of 80,295 – 88,346.

The Economic Effect of Caring

The estimation of the economic costs of informal care depends on the methodology used. The opportunity cost for Tasmanian carers is estimated at \$193,161,000 per year. The costs that would be incurred if professional home care workers were employed to replace the work done by informal carers (replacement costs) are much higher at \$1,263,144,975.

The Social Contribution of Carers

In terms of social contribution, the provision of informal care is one of the indicators used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to measure social capital in our community. The willingness to take on a caring role reflects the public good of community support. Carers also contribute to the wellbeing and social connectedness of the people for whom they care, but are themselves gravely disadvantaged in their ability to participate in society. The activities of Carers Tasmania help to offset this disadvantage by providing access to resources and new social networks to replace those lost by carers.