

Chair

Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

## **CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED NEW ZEALAND CARERS' STRATEGY ACTION PLAN FOR 2019 TO 2023**

### **Proposal**

- 1 I am seeking Cabinet approval to publicly consult on the proposed New Zealand Carers' Strategy Action Plan (Action Plan) for 2019 to 2023, including release of the attached discussion document to support engagement with communities.

### **Executive summary**

- 2 The Carers' Strategy is a cross-government strategy for all carers, recognising the valuable contribution they make supporting friends, family and whānau members to remain living in the community. For the purpose of the Carers' Strategy, carers are people who support family, whānau and friends with a disability, illness, injury or health condition and who need assistance with day-to-day living. One in ten New Zealanders are in a care role, and this number is likely to increase as the population ages and more people experience multiple health conditions. We also know that the caring role falls unequally across the population, with the majority of carers being women. The care role is also proportionately greater within Māori and Pacific communities.
- 3 The Carers' Strategy was launched in 2008. It is supported by a five-year Action Plan. The most recent Action Plan covered the period 2014 to 2018. Developing a new Action Plan presents us with an opportunity to better support carers, and respond to the increasing demand for carers. Officials are now working in partnership with the New Zealand Carers Alliance (Carers Alliance) and a cross-agency working group to develop the new Action Plan for 2019 to 2023. In addition, officials are working with organisations that work with and represent Māori carers and Pacific carers to ensure their voices are reflected in the Strategy and the supporting actions.
- 4 Initial targeted public engagement in 2018 invited carers to share their challenges and what worked well for them. It also focused on building a better understanding about the lesser known issues and care experiences for distinct carer populations, with a focus on Māori, Pacific, younger (25 years and under) and older carers (65 years and over).
- 5 The new Action Plan is underpinned by a wellbeing approach. This aims to better support and recognise the work of carers. The Plan has an additional focus on four target populations: Māori, Pacific, younger and older carers. Actions for these populations focus on supporting them to better access existing services, and as the identified actions are further developed, to provide tailored responses to meet their particular needs.
- 6 The proposed Action Plan is organised under four focus areas that reflect what carers have told us is most important to them:

- **Recognition:** recognising carers and their contributions
  - **Navigation:** ensuring carers receive support and services
  - **Support:** caring for carers – supporting wellbeing and building skills
  - **Balance:** supporting paid work, study and other opportunities.
- 7 I propose that public consultation on the draft Action Plan take place in July-August 2019. The aim of this is to ensure that the proposed actions reflect what matters most for carers and caring whānau.
  - 8 I intend to report back to Cabinet by November 2019 with the final Action Plan, where I will also ask relevant portfolio Ministers to co-sign the Action Plan. This will signal to carers that there is strong cross-government support for their work and recognition of the contribution that they make. The launch of the Action Plan is planned for November 2019.
  - 9 I will also be seeking the support of relevant portfolio Ministers to ensure strong alignment with Whānau Ora, and adopting of whānau centred policies across government for relevant actions that support the Carers' Strategy Action Plan.

## **The Carers' Strategy recognises the contribution carers make to society**

- 10 Carers are people who support family, whānau and friends with a disability, illness, injury, or health condition who need assistance with day-to-day living<sup>1</sup>. Carers play a crucial role in enabling people to live and participate in their communities, and reduce the need for support through the health and aged care systems. Infometrics estimated the value of this support to be within the range of \$7.3 billion to \$17.6 billion<sup>2</sup>.
- 11 The 2013 Census identified approximately 430,000 carers in New Zealand. This represents 10 per cent of the population, and was a 13 per cent increase from the 2001 Census. Of the people who identified as being a carer, 63 per cent were women, mostly aged between 40 and 60 years. However, the number of carers in society may be greater as the care role is often hidden in families and communities, in part because many consider it to be just “what families do”.
- 12 The demand for carers is also growing as a result of changing demographic trends, including people living longer, more people experiencing multiple health conditions, and a focus on supporting people to remain in their homes. Changing family and whānau structures, and potential loss of income from paid employment, create additional pressures on the ability of families to provide care.
- 13 Similar trends of rising demand for carers can be seen in other OECD countries. Reflecting this, countries such as the UK, France, Germany and Australia have all taken steps to recognise and support carers. In the UK, ministers co-signed the UK Carers' Action Plan 2018 to 2020 to demonstrate their commitment to cross-government action.

<sup>1</sup> This does not include the paid professional workforce or caregivers of children who do *not* have a significant disability, illness or health condition.

<sup>2</sup> Infometrics (2014) *The economic value and impacts of informal care in New Zealand*. In 2019 the value of this support is likely to be greater due to inflation and the possible increase in number of carers.

- 14 The Carers' Strategy was launched in 2008 in response to a call to action by the Carers Alliance<sup>3</sup> to improve support for carers. The strategy has been supported by two five-year Action Plans (2008 - 2012 and 2014 - 2018), however these have not adequately addressed issues that carers still face. This new Action Plan presents an opportunity for the Government to commit to better supporting carers by improving their wellbeing and ensuring the care role is sustainable into the future. The wellbeing approach of the strategy aligns with the government's priorities of learning, earning, caring, and volunteering.

### **The new Action Plan is shaped by carer priorities**

- 15 While the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) has led the development of the Action Plan, cross-government support has been vital for success. MSD has worked with the Carers Alliance, key partner agencies<sup>4</sup> as well as other relevant agencies<sup>5</sup> to identify and develop actions. The Carers Alliance has identified four priorities for the care sector which have been informed through previous consultations, and work the 45 organisations of the Carers Alliance does with carers and their families. These priorities are:
- a fair, consistent and accessible respite system, so people are able to take a break from their caring role
  - flexible funding options so families are empowered to choose their own support, including for being able to take a break
  - changes to Ministry of Health and District Health Board Funded Family Care policies
  - more accessible continence support and services.
- 16 This Action Plan, like others before it, aims to support all people and whānau providing care. It acknowledges that the majority of carers are women, who may experience poorer outcomes, particularly in health and employment. Critically, it recognises that the experiences and needs of all carers are not the same. In recognition of New Zealand's growing ethnic diversity, this Action Plan will also take the first step in learning more about carers in Asian, refugee and migrant communities, as there is currently little information available about them (proposed action 3 and 4).
- 17 Therefore the Action Plan has a focus on Māori carers, Pacific carers, younger, and older carers due to the additional challenges these groups face in their care role, and the importance of ensuring there are appropriate services and supports to help them.
- Māori women are more likely to be carers than women in other population groups, and are also typically younger than other carers. Māori communities have higher rates and levels of co-morbidity of long term health conditions and related health issues, with carers more likely to be managing their own health condition as well as their care role. Māori can have cultural understandings of care that mean they may not see themselves

3 The New Zealand Carers Alliance is a coalition of more than 45 not-for-profit organisations seeking progress for family carers, collectively supporting tens of thousands of New Zealand carers. Carers NZ with its own network of 50,000 carers and supporters acts as the ongoing Secretariat for the Alliance.

4 The Ministries for Business, Innovation and Employment, Health, and Education, and the Accident Compensation Corporation.

5 Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministries for Pacific Peoples, Youth, and Women, Office for Seniors, and Office for Disability Issues.

as carers, as this role is seen as part of whānau. This can influence whether, or how they access support.

- Pacific carers are often younger than the general carer population. Pacific carers can have different cultural understandings of care, with spirituality and faith factoring in this. Pacific carers have told us that they may not see themselves as a carer, and negative experiences with services may mean they feel reluctant to engage further. Pacific communities tend to have poorer health than the general population, with carers having to deal with their own health conditions, thereby increasing the need for care and support.
- Younger carers often do not think of themselves as carers also. They may not want to draw attention to themselves, as they may believe there will be negative perceptions of their role, or that this will have ramifications for their wider family situation. This group can include very young children looking after family and whānau, including children at a primary and secondary school age who are undertaking significant care responsibilities.
- Older carers may experience social isolation. The demands of their care role reduces the ability for participation in social activities, especially where they are caring for a partner who requires additional assistance. They are often also managing their own health conditions and may require support themselves.

18 In September 2018, Cabinet agreed to the release of an online survey for carers and for targeted engagement to be carried out with the four target populations [SWC-18-MIN-0120 refers]. The purpose of the initial engagement was to gain feedback from carers and better understand the lesser known issues and experiences faced by Māori, Pacific, younger and older carers. The findings are summarised in the attached discussion document, highlighting that while carers have many common experiences, different groups of carers have unique needs as well.

19 Initial engagement and research also showed that health and wellbeing was a concern for many carers, and that they often prioritise the person they care for but spend little time addressing their own health concerns. A third of carers said they had a disability or health condition that affected their ability to provide care. Others said that caring could be rewarding, but could also create stress, exhaustion, social isolation, anxiety and depression, not only for them but also for their families. This feedback emphasises that we need to ensure that carer and whānau wellbeing is a priority in the Action Plan.

### **The Action Plan aligns with other Government priorities**

20 The Action Plan 2019–2023 includes work on a number of priority areas, for example, government commitment on Funded Family Care policies and work to improve respite care services. Other relevant work taken into account includes (but is not limited to):

- Government response to review of Whānau Ora Review: Tipu Matoro ki Te Ao and the Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework (Te Puni Kōkiri)
- Better Later Life Strategy – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019-2034 (Office for Seniors)
- Healthy Ageing Strategy 2016 (Ministry of Health)

- New Zealand Disability Strategy (Office for Disability Issues)
- Transforming Respite: Disability Support Services Respite Strategy 2017 - 2022 (Ministry of Health)
- He Korowai Oranga – Māori Health Strategy (2002) (Ministry of Health)
- 'Ala Mo'ui: Pathways to Pacific Health and Wellbeing 2014 - 2018 (Ministry of Health)
- New Zealand Framework for Dementia Care 2013 (Ministry of Health)
- Health and Disability System Review
- Government's response to He Ara Oranga, Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction
- The overhaul of the welfare system (Ministry of Social Development)
- The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet)
- Work on a new approach to employer assisted work visas and regional workforce planning (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment)
- The Lalanga Fou Report (Ministry for Pacific Peoples).

### **The new Action Plan proposes initiatives across key focus areas**

- 21 We have grouped actions around the focus areas that carers have told us matters most to them. These are outlined below. The Carers Alliance's four priorities are also incorporated into the proposed list of actions.
- 22 These focus areas and the associated twenty actions are outlined below, with further detail provided in the attached discussion document. All actions will be subject to a population lens, to ensure the Action Plan recognises and addresses specific issues that are relevant to Māori, Pacific, younger and older carers. This will be an important aspect of the implementation of the actions.

#### **Recognition:** *Recognising carers and their contributions*

- 23 Carers have told us they want their work to be recognised and valued. Recognition from professionals, service providers and communities may also help carers better access support and other opportunities.
- 24 The Action Plan seeks to improve the recognition and identification of carers by:
  - Exploring mechanisms, including legislation, to better recognise carers and their particular needs
  - Developing a national campaign to raise awareness of carers, including a national Carers Day

- Better understanding the needs of carers, particularly younger, older, Māori, and Pacific carers, as well as other hidden carers by creating a Carer Research Fund
- Improving information about carers through modifying existing data collection tools and adapting tools from other countries for the New Zealand context
- Better support to include the voices of young carers in policy development.

**Navigation:** *Ensuring carers receive support and services*

- 25 Carers told us they can find it difficult to access support, either because they do not have access to relevant information, or find it challenging to navigate the complexity of different systems. Carers also want to ‘have a break’, but find it difficult to access respite that meets their needs – it must be affordable, easily available, culturally appropriate and of high quality.
- 26 The Actions have been identified to improve carers’ access to supports and create a more responsive system by:
- Working with carers, people receiving care and relevant sectors and agencies to explore the benefit of a national approach to managing continence
  - Strengthening navigation across all parts of the care and support system (including health, welfare, and ACC)
  - Improving engagement between people needing care, their carers, and supporting agencies and providers, including Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies and providers, by making information more accessible
  - Identifying whānau-centred tools and initiatives that provide culturally responsive approaches for Māori carers and their whānau.
  - Improving the quality, accessibility and equity of services across New Zealand to enable carers to take a break (including flexible disability respite budgets – I Choose<sup>6</sup>)

**Support:** *Caring for carers – supporting wellbeing and building skills*

- 27 Carers told us they want more support for the care role, with timely, accessible, and culturally appropriate resources and learning. Many carers have also said they experience poor health and reduced wellbeing, which particularly reflects the impacts of social isolation, financial stress, and the physical and emotional demands of care.
- 28 The Action Plan seeks to support carer capability, wellbeing and financial stability by:
- Helping carers to access relevant information about the care role through improved language, formats, and accessible tools
  - Updating the resource *A Guide for Carers* to ensure it is relevant for the different carer groups

<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Health is providing advice to Health Ministers on the status of I Choose.

- Development of pathways within schools to support young carers and their family and whānau to access the support they need – this would have a focus on supports and services such as Social Workers in Schools and will be led by the Ministry of Education and Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children
- Develop and implement initiatives to preserve and grow social networks, supports and connections for older carers and carers of older people
- Responding to the Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry recommendations for families and whānau carers of people requiring mental health and addiction support (recommendations 23 – 25)<sup>7</sup>
- Funded Family Care policy change<sup>8</sup>
- Reviewing policy settings for financial support for carers
- Considering a carer payment and / or other types of improved financial support for carer wellbeing

**Balance:** *Supporting paid work, study and other interests*

- 29 Carers have said it can be difficult to balance work and study with caring, especially as the demand for care can vary over time. They would also like recognition for their care experience and other transferable skills from both education providers and employers.
- 30 The Action Plan will work to respond to these concerns by:
- developing the New Zealand’s CareWise initiative, including work to expand promotion of flexible working
  - developing carer skills and learning through enabling access to formal training programmes that credit care experience and lead into further training or employment opportunities.

**Public consultation on the Action Plan will ensure proposed actions best respond to carer priorities**

- 31 I propose that MSD and the Carers Alliance lead the public consultation process to seek feedback from the community on the draft Action Plan. Consultation will ensure actions are focused on the things that matter most to carers.
- 32 Officials will ensure that consultation is accessible for all carers and their families and whānau.
- 33 Consultation is planned to take place in July-August 2019. The intention is that it will include the release of a discussion document (see attached) followed by face-to-face meetings around New Zealand. People will also be able to provide feedback online.

<sup>7</sup> The Government is considering advice on the response to the inquiry.

<sup>8</sup> A further Cabinet paper seeking change to FFC was considered at SWC on 22 May 2019. There is an aligned Budget 2019 bid (Budget sensitive information).

- 34 The Action Plan will be amended as appropriate after the consultation process. I intend to seek Cabinet approval for the final Action Plan by November 2019. I have also spoken to those of you in relevant portfolio areas about being co-signatories to the Action Plan. This will demonstrate cross-government support for carers and to recognise the important role carers have in our communities.

### **Views will also be sought on what to call the new Strategy to best reflect the diverse group of people who provide support to others**

- 35 Concurrent with the public consultation process over the Action Plan, I propose to canvas public views on the title 'Carers' Strategy'. This will ensure that naming of the Strategy reflects the current and future demographic of our society and is easily understood by all New Zealanders. This will also include seeking people's views about the term 'carer' and whether the Action Plan should reflect how people like to define the work they do to support others.

### **Research and feedback on actions may identify further work for the Action Plan**

- 36 Actions will be phased over the next five years, with some aimed at developing an evidence base and identifying options for further work in that area.
- 37 When I present the final Action Plan in November, I will seek your agreement to make decisions on any changes or additions to the Action Plan where further work can be progressed within the five-year timeframe.

### **Measuring the outcomes of the Action Plan will ensure it is making a meaningful difference in carers' lives**

- 38 Initial work is underway to the approach to measuring and evaluating the impact of initiatives in the Action Plan. This will draw on a number of frameworks, including the:
- Treasury's Living Standards Framework
  - Whānau Rangatiratanga Framework
  - Whānau Ora Framework,
  - Lalanga Fou Report framework and tools
  - Kapasa framework and tools.
- 39 These frameworks will help to ensure broad perspectives are incorporated in measuring wellbeing outcomes for carers. This includes a Te Ao Māori view and to ensure Pacific peoples values are incorporated into implementation of the actions.

### **Consultation**

- 40 MSD has worked closely with relevant agencies and the Carers Alliance to ensure the Action Plan aligns with carer priorities. There has also been engagement with the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies to work on specific whānau-centred initiatives for the Action Plan.

- 41 The following departments have been consulted on the proposals in this paper: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Accident Compensation Corporation, Statistics New Zealand, Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Ministry for Women, Ministry for Youth Development, Oranga Tamariki, Office for Seniors, Office for Disability Issues, Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector, New Zealand Police, and Veterans' Affairs. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet have been informed<sup>9</sup>.

### **Financial implications**

- 42 The cost of the consultation will be met within MSD baseline funding. Some actions within the Action Plan require new funding and will be subject to the Budget process. Details of actions with financial implications will be included in the Final Action Plan and presented to Cabinet later this year.

### **Human rights implications**

- 43 There are no direct human rights implications for this paper. The programme of work agreed to support final actions will be managed to ensure they are consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

### **Legislative implications**

- 44 There are no direct legislative implications in this paper. However, there are legislative implications for some actions, e.g. legislation will be considered among the options to support greater recognition of carers (Action 1). The Government has also stated its intention to repeal legislation related to FFC.

### **Impact analysis**

- 45 A Regulatory Impact Analysis is not required.

### **Gender implications**

- 46 Women undertake the majority of care work in New Zealand, and most carers that are intended to be covered by this Action Plan are also women. This is particularly notable given that carers experience poorer outcomes compared to non-carers, especially in health and employment. I expect proposals in the Action Plan to consider how to address these concerns and therefore benefit and better support women carers. Actions that specifically address the needs of Māori, Pacific, younger and older carers are also expected to benefit women within these populations.

### **Disability perspective**

- 47 Many carers are supporting a disabled person or have a disability themselves. Better supporting people in a care role not only benefits the carers, but could in

<sup>9</sup> Others that may be added (depending on involvement in actions): Ministry of Justice, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, State Services Commission, Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Tertiary Education Commission.

turn enhance the ability of disabled people they care for to live well and independently.

- 48 Officials will work closely with the Office for Disability Issues to share information relevant to the refreshed Disability Action Plan and the Carers' Strategy Action Plan. This will include considering any implications for the carer, as well as the disabled person being cared for.

## Publicity

- 49 Subject to Cabinet decisions in this paper, my office will work with MSD and the Carers Alliance to manage communications while targeting stakeholder participation in the public consultation process.

## Proactive release

- 50 I propose to proactively release this paper following the release of the draft strategy for consultation. At this stage the planned date for release of the draft strategy falls within the 30 day period for proactive release. If the release of the draft strategy is delayed, it would also be necessary to delay the release of the Cabinet paper. There may be a need to withhold information that is subject to Cabinet consideration and/or Budget 2019 decisions. However, as these issues are to be considered soon, some of the information may be released separately.

## Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- 1 **note** that the a new draft Carers' Strategy Action Plan 2019 – 2023 is being developed in partnership with the Carers Alliance and with relevant agencies.
- 2 **note** for the purpose of the Carers' Strategy, carers are people who support family, whānau and friends with a disability, illness, injury or health condition and who need assistance with day-to-day living.
- 3 **note** that the new draft Action Plan 2019 – 2023 responds to carer priorities and increasing demand for care and government support, and has an additional focus on four target populations: Māori, Pacific, younger, and older carers.
- 4 **note** that the new draft Action Plan proposes initiatives across four key areas identified by carers as being important:
  - 4.1 **Recognition:** recognising carers and their contributions
  - 4.2 **Navigation:** ensuring carers receive support and services
  - 4.3 **Support:** caring for carers – supporting wellbeing and building skills
  - 4.4 **Balance:** supporting paid work, study and other interests.
- 5 **approve** the proposed public consultation process, including release of the attached discussion document to support engagement on the new draft Action Plan.

- 6 **authorise** the Minister for Social Development to make minor editorial, design and formatting changes to the draft Action Plan as required prior to public release.
- 7 **note** that the Minister for Social Development intends to report to Cabinet with a final Carers' Strategy Action Plan for 2019 to 2023 by November 2019.
- 8 **note** that in line with the Government's priority focus on people who are earning, learning, caring and volunteering, relevant portfolio Ministers will be invited to co-sign the final Action Plan in November 2019.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni  
Minister for Social Development