

Carer Companion



Helping guide you on your carer journey

About the Carer Companion

The Carer Companion is a resource to support individuals and families in a caring role.

This resource developed from the Connecting Carers in Indigo Project. The project was supported by the Victorian Government.

Carer: Carers are people who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail aged.

carersaustralia.com.au/about-carers/who-is-a-carer

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community. We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.



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Using the Companion

Welcome to the Carer Companion. This Carer Companion is a resource designed by carers to support those in a caring role. It is a place for you to record, reflect, plan and address areas to guide and support you.

We hope that it assists in guiding you on your carer journey as you gather information, discover who to call, what questions to ask, and the resources available to you.

Tips and things to consider in completing this companion:

Review this companion	Set aside time to complete the relevant information
Take your time	There is no need to complete this Companion all at once
Discuss this resource	Share this resource with a trusted person close to the person you are caring for
Ask questions	Don't be afraid to ask questions you might have along your journey
Privacy	Find a safe place to store this resource and storing all important documents. Be careful where you store and/or take this resource as it may contain private information
Consider your needs	Make time for your own health and wellbeing
Share the load	Say 'yes' when people offer to help
Seek support	Call a helpline if you need additional support. Carer help is available

Privacy

In using this companion, consider the privacy of the person for whom you care. Protect their personal information as much as you can.

If possible, gain their consent before storing their information in this resource.

Keep personal and medical details stored separately in a secure location at home, and scan copies to store securely online as a backup.

Reference:

carerhelp.com.au/Portals/16/Documents/Carersheet/Tips%20from%20carers.pdf and carergateway.gov.au/tips

Personal Information

Your name:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

Your emergency contact/s

Name:

Contact details:

Relationship to you:

In case of an emergency with you, questions to consider:

Who is the person who will take over the caring role?

Name:

Contact details:

Relationship to you:

Who has your information if you are for any reason unwell and unable to fulfill your caring role?

Name:

Contact details:

Relationship to you:

Who have you told about this resource and where to find it?

Name:

Contact details:

Relationship to you:

About the Person you care for

Personal Information

Details about the Person you care for:

Their name:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

Dependant/s:

(Including animals)

Other people that are important:

Name:

Contact details:

Relationship:

Name:	Contact details:	Relationship:

Their Story

About Me:

What is important to share?

This may be helpful when introducing a person for the first time.

Example: My story

Place of birth, childhood memories, place where I grew up, stories I like to share

About the Person you care for

Hi, I'm _____

[name of the person you care for]

Things that make me calm and/or happy are:

Things that make me sad or worried are:

The best way for me to communicate is:

Things that make me laugh:

Things I like and things I dislike:

I love to (interests):

Things I do not want to talk about: "No go topics"

Other things I'd like you to know about me:

About the Person you care for

Share their care needs:

Take time to fill out the information (where relevant) about any care needs for the person you are caring for.

Use the table below to provide any information to assist you and others.

Use these prompts to help you:

- Independent
- Requires assistance
- Needs supervision
- Needs prompting
- Routines
- Equipment/Aids/Devices
- External support

Diet	Any dietary requirements: <hr/>
	Food preferences (likes/dislikes): <hr/>
	Allergies/intolerances: <hr/>
Oral health	<hr/>
Bathing/showering/dressing	<hr/>
Mobility	<hr/>
Continence & toileting	<hr/>
Communication	<hr/>
Vision	<hr/>
Hearing	<hr/>
Sleep	<hr/>
Behaviours	<hr/>
Cognition	<hr/>

About the Person you care for

Important Contacts

	Name	Phone Email
Next of Kin		
Doctor/s		
Lawyer/solicitor		
Preferred Hospital		

Reference Numbers / Codes

	Reference Numbers	Phone Email
Medicare		
Pension		
Health Cover Name:		
Ambulance Cover		
Centrelink		
My Aged Care		
My Gov		
NDIS		
Other:		

- Ensure you have permission to record this information
- Please remember to store your passwords somewhere secure

Medical Information

Tell the medical story

An overview of current and historical medical conditions of the person you are caring for:

It's important to plan and put things in place to make it easier for you and the person you are caring for. It helps to understand and plan for what matters to them.

- Talk with the person about what their wishes and needs are.
- You can also talk with health care providers and other services to see how they can help

Review each of the following sections that are relevant for you.

Not all sections will be relevant for your caring situation - Please review according to your needs.

Planning care needs

To assist with the care role and access supports for the person you are caring for (if relevant):

Register with My Aged Care (if over 65 years)

Register with National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Register with Carer Gateway for carer support

Discuss carer role with GP and request a support letter

Linking MyGov accounts

Discuss finances and long term care arrangements with an accountant or financial adviser

Important conversations

Understanding what might happen in the future will help you to plan for the person you care for. Sometimes these conversations are difficult to have, however, talking about what they want helps to understand and plan to support their wishes.

Conversations can also have legal implications that are important to understand for the person and for you as the carer. It is never too early to sort out the legal arrangements you will need to make sure a person's wishes can be respected. Important conversations you may like to consider are:

- What would they like to happen to their assets and possessions? This can be formalised by making a Will.
- Who would they like to manage their finances if they are not able to do (this is called a Power of Attorney)?
- What do they want to happen with their pets?
- Plans for children.
- Any other matters that are important to them?

Discuss and record these in the final section of the Companion.

Legal matters

As a carer, you may need to manage the legal affairs of the person you care for. This includes ensuring that legal matters are in order and family are aware of their wishes and decisions.

Some of the legal matters you will need to consider are the following:

Making a Will

Appointing a Power of Attorney

Making a Will

Will: A Will is a legal document an individual writes saying how they would like their estate handled after they pass away

A well-written and current Will helps make sure:

- assets (money and property) are given to who you choose
 - who will take care of the assets and make arrangements after you die – *this person is called the executor, this can be a family member, trusted friend or a public executor agency*
 - who will care for your children
 - the people managing your estate know how you want things done
 - what sort of funeral you want
- If something changes, you can change your Will at any time.

How to make a Will

You should get legal help to write a Will. You can make a Will yourself through an online Will guided platform or book an appointment to work with a professional.

service.vic.gov.au/find-services/personal/make-a-will

DISCLAIMER – this information is general in nature and is not formal legal or financial advice. If you require any support for legal and financial matters, seek advice from a lawyer, financial adviser and/or accountant.

Power of Attorney

If the person you care for can't manage their financial or legal affairs, a **Power of Attorney** can be given to someone else to make decisions for them.

What can a Power of Attorney do?

A Power of Attorney gives a person or organisation the legal right to manage the money and legal affairs of another person. There are different types of Power of Attorney. Seek advice on what is needed for your circumstances.

legalaid.vic.gov.au/powers-attorney

It is important for everybody in your family to know who has been appointed to support decision-making and/or to make important decisions when someone is no longer able to do this for themselves.

Getting help with legal services

You can get legal advice from Legal Aid or from other expert legal services. Legal Aid Commissions in each state or territory provide free services in family, criminal and civil law matters:

LOCAL - Hume Riverina Legal Service

hrcls.org.au

Phone: (02) 6055 8090 or 1800 918 377

Victoria

legalaid.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 792 387

NSW

legalaid.nsw.gov.au

Phone: 1300 888 529

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

vals.org.au

Phone: 1800 064 865

Future planning

If you care for someone with a long-term illness or disability, things are likely to change over time. The person might need more care in the future, or you might not be able to keep caring for them.

Carer Gateway provides information to guide you and assist you in a number of areas including:

- Family meetings
 - Planning for a long-term condition
 - Caring for a child becoming an adult
 - Advance care planning
 - Your changing role
 - If you can't provide care any more
 - Life after caring
- carergateway.gov.au/future-planning
-

Advance Care Planning

Advance Care Planning is a discussion which explores the person's preferences for their end of life if they become unable to communicate and make decisions for themselves.

Advance Care Directive:

An Advance Care Directive is the legal document with the advance care plan instructions.

To develop an Advance Care Plan – speak with your GP and/or health professional.

For more information:

advancecareplanning.org.au

carergateway.gov.au/legal-matters

Planning for emergencies

Emergency Care Plan

Carer Gateway

Carer Gateway provides an excellent resource to assist you to plan for emergencies.

The emergency might involve the person you care for or it might also involve you. Having a plan in place means that if something goes wrong, the person you care for can still be supported.

carergateway.gov.au/planning



Emergency Medical Information Book

Produced by Ambulance Service, Rotary & Lions.

This resource goes on the fridge and has all details in case ambulance is called.

emib.org.au



Financial Matters

There is financial assistance for you and the person for whom you are caring.

You may be eligible for some financial assistance while caring, especially if you have stopped working or reduced your work hours in order to care. You are encouraged to apply and make use of this support. You may be able to receive payments to meet the costs of caring.

Source: carerhelp.com.au/Resources/CarerHelp-Info-Pack

Accessing financial supports

There is some financial support for carers if you qualify. There are also Carer support programs that can help such as Victorian Support for Carers Program.

This financial support may include paying for:

- equipment to help you care for someone
- planned respite so that you can take a break
- transport

servicesaustralia.gov.au/carers-payment

Consider the following (if relevant):

- Make an appointment with Financial Services at Centrelink to find out what is available to you
- Apply for Carers Payment & Carers Allowance
- Apply for a Companion Card
- Apply for a Carers Card
- Apply for a Transport/taxi card
- Discuss finances and long term care arrangement with an accountant or financial adviser

Other financial matters

Money Smart is a very useful website for financial matters. There are a number of sections that assist in planning and managing different situations. There are free calculators, tips and guidance readily available.

moneysmart.gov.au

Other legal matters

Carers may have different legal powers and responsibilities, depending on their role and the person they care for.

The legal powers you may need as a carer can change over time, depending on whether the condition of the person improves or gets worse. Take time to review this:

carergateway.gov.au/legal-matters

Your rights as a carer

It's important to know your legal rights as a carer. The rights of Australia's carers are recognised by national, state and territory laws and policies.

If you are a carer, you have the right to:

- be treated with respect and considered as a partner with other care providers
- work and be supported by employers
- use public spaces and businesses without discrimination – the Australian Human Rights Commission has a guide to anti-discrimination in Australia
- complain about services
- appeal against decisions
- privacy and confidentiality

In general, you also have the right to information about the health of the person you care for. Health professionals are allowed to share information with patients and carers so that all can work together.

carergateway.gov.au/legal-matters

Your wellbeing

You are amazing and you are doing an incredible job – You are not alone. It is important to care for yourself and allow others to support you.

Your physical and mental health is important so take time to look out for you. Balance your caring responsibilities and manage your own wellbeing so that you can continue to be there for those you care for. Recognise what is important to you and what you enjoy. Make time for these.

Eat well	Eat healthy, nutritious meals
Be active	Be physically active and find an activity you enjoy - make it part of your life
Rest	Get enough sleep, make time to rest and take a break
Connect	Connect with others, connect your spiritual & your creative self
Be aware	Practice mindfulness, take time to notice the things around you
Take a break & Share the load	Say 'yes' when people offer to help and explore your informal and formal respite options

Connecting with others

Connecting with others who share your experiences is really important and taking time to do this while difficult will be of great benefit.

Finding places to connect:

- Carers' Groups – look out for local groups / peer support and online groups. You will connect with people who have walked or are walking your path.
- Local Neighbourhood Houses - Your local Neighbourhood House is a great support and provides resources, activities and can refer you to other services.
- Reach out to support organisations relevant to diagnosis. For example; Cancer Council, Dementia Australia
- Social, community and sporting groups and activities. For example; book clubs, arts & music groups, walking groups, parenting groups, Men's sheds, Service clubs

Be active

Being physically active makes you feel good and helps to clear your mind.

It can help:

- reduce stress
- boost your memory
- improve your concentration
- give you more energy
- improve your sleep
- reduce symptoms of mental health conditions help with recovery from a mental health issue

Mental Health

Take the self care steps you encourage the person you care for to take for yourself. A healthy mind is just as important as a healthy body for your overall wellbeing.

Mental health services that can be of support:

- Head to Health
- Beyond Blue
- Lifeline
- Black Dog Institute
- Speak to your GP, Social Worker and Health Care workers

Take a break – Share the load

A primary carer role does not mean you have to be the only carer.

Share the load with family and friends.

What can you delegate to others?

Many people want to help – Being able to hand over this Companion, can help you to say ‘Yes’.

Find ways to take a break and explore your **respite** options.

What is respite?

‘Respite’ or ‘respite care’ is when someone else takes care of the person you care for, so that you can have a break. These options can be formal and informal, in the home, or in the community

carergateway.gov.au/respite

Everyone needs a break from their day-to-day routine every now and then. Respite is a good break for:

- carers
- the person they care for

A break can give you time to do everyday activities or to relax, deal with stress and look after yourself. You can get:

- Planned respite – a break to rest while a respite service looks after the person you care for
- Emergency respite – if something urgent happens and you can’t look after the person you care for.

carergateway.gov.au/services-and-support

Wellbeing Resources:

5 ways to wellbeing

5waystowellbeing.org.au

betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Healthy Eating

nutritionaustralia.org

Physical activity

healthdirect.gov.au/exercise-and-mental-health#benefits

Attending appointments

Preparing for an appointment is important and can help to make the most of this time. Write down any questions you may have before going to any appointments. It can ensure:

- you get the information needed
- you remember everything you want to ask
- you involve the person you care for in decisions made about their health

Don't be afraid to ask questions!

Helpful resources

healthdirect – Question Builder

This tool helps to create a list of questions to ask the medical professional whether they:

- have new symptoms
- are having a check-up
- are managing a chronic health condition
- are discussing a medicine, a test or surgery

healthdirect.gov.au/question-builder

The Indigo 4Ms tool for Older People

The Indigo 4Ms tool is another resource to assist you to have conversations with a health care team. The tool is very useful to provide a series of questions and prompts to guide you with what is important for the person for whom you are caring to share this with their health team.

agefriendlyne.vic.au/documents/Indigo-4Ms-Toolkit-for-Older-People_Screen.pdf

Make the most out of your medical appointment

Be prepared for your appointment

Ask questions

Discuss your preferences

Use our tool to help you prepare

The online Question Builder

www.healthdirect.gov.au/question-builder

AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE

healthdirect Australia

Image Source:

safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/patient-and-consumer-centred-care/health-literacy/question-builder



Websites and links for support

For more information, supports and often online services, reach out to the following:

Services Australia

servicesaustralia.gov.au/caring-for-someone

Carer Gateway

Carer Gateway is an Australian Government program providing free services and support for carers.

carergateway.gov.au

Phone: 1800 422 737

Carers Victoria

Carers Victoria is the statewide voice for family carers, representing and providing support to carers in Victoria.

carersvictoria.org.au

Phone: 1800 514 845

Gateway Health

Carer Support Program provides a range of services to support carers to manage their caring role and improve their wellbeing.

gatewayhealth.org.au/services/support-for-carers

Email: CarerSupport@GatewayHealth.org.au

Upper Murray Family Care

Providing short-term, flexible support to carers.

umfc.com.au/what-we-do/carers-aged-disability-services/support-for-carers

Phone: 02 6057 840

Email: supportoptions@umfc.com.au

Mental Health & Wellbeing Connect

Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect is a new service dedicated to those who are supporting people living with mental health and substance use challenges or psychological distress.

Phone: 1800 572 129

Health and support contacts

Who to call when you need help

Service:	About	Phone:	Hours:
EMERGENCY	CALL: 000		24/7
NURSE-ON-CALL	Expert health advice from a nurse	1300 60 60 24	24/7
Area mental health services triage	Crisis support	1300 104 211	24/7
Beyond Blue	Telephone support services online chat from 4pm - 10pm beyondblue.org.au	1300 22 4636	24/7
Lifeline	Crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services lifeline.org.au	13 11 14	24/7
Suicide Call back Service	Counselling support for anyone affected by suicide suicidcallbackservice.org.au	1300 659 467	
1800RESPECT	Telephone support for people impacted by sexual assault, family violence & abuse 1800respect.org.au	1800 737 732	24/7
Safe Steps	Victoria's family violence response centre safesteps.org.au	1800 015 188	24/7
13 Yarn	Telephone support with a Lifeline trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter 13yarn.org.au	13 92 76	24/7
National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline	Telephone support service providing advice about alcohol and other drugs	1800 250 015	24/7
Kids Helpline	Telephone support services and online chat for people aged 5-25 years kidshelpline.com.au	1800 184 527	24/7

Resources, Notes & Journal

For You & the
Person you care for

Service:	About	Phone:	Hours:
MensLine Australia	Telephone support services mensline.org.au	1300 789 978	24/7
QLife	Anonymous LGBTQIA+ peer support qlife.org.au	1800 184 527	3pm - midnight
Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling	Support for Australian veterans and their families openarms.gov.au	1800 011 046	24/7

This is a section for you to use:

- Notes for appointments
- Thoughts to get down on paper
- Things to remember
- Information to share with others

TIP: Include the date

Notes:

For You & the
Person you care for

Notes & Journal

Notes:

**This companion
was completed on:**

(date)

Reviewed on:

Reviewed on:

Reviewed on:

About this resource

In the Indigo Shire, this resource will be available at:

Chiltern Neighbourhood House	11 Main Street, Chiltern
Quercus Beechworth	26 Ford Street, Beechworth
Yackandandah Community Centre	29 High Street, Yackandandah
Beechworth Health Service	52 Sydney Rd, Beechworth
Indigo North Health	11 Main St, Chiltern
Open Door Neighbourhood House	61 Burke Street, Wangaratta



This Carer Companion was developed through the Connecting Carers in Indigo Project with the above partners and most importantly, carers.

The project was co-designed with local carers that identified a community need resulting in this companion guide.

We have relied on information from existing resources alongside the expertise of lived experience of our carer advisory and governance groups.

We hope that it assists carers on their journey and raises the awareness of the needs of carers in our community.