

**LIFE  
WITHOUT  
BARRIERS**

# **Carer Strategy 25-26**

**Innovating the Carer Journey**

**[lwb.org.au](http://lwb.org.au)**

# Acknowledgement of Country

Life Without Barriers acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and their connection to land, water and community.

We pay our respects to them, their cultures and customs and to their Elders, past and present, and the continuation of knowledge and culture. We believe that reconciliation must live in the hearts and minds of all Australians.

We are committed to an ongoing journey towards truth telling and reconciliation. We recognise and value the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, carers, people we support, peak bodies, organisations, their leaders, and communities across Australia as we continue our reconciliation journey together.

'Empowered Voices' artwork created by Keisha Leon, Lisa Sorbie Martin and Gilimbaa.

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## Introduction

In recent years, Australia has seen a significant reduction in the number of people available to provide foster care. Various factors have been suggested to explain the decline, including increasing cost-of-living pressures, the impacts of an ageing population and changing working dynamics within families. As a result, foster care providers face significant challenges in recruiting and retaining enough carers to support vulnerable children and young people.

Whilst efforts to provide early intervention and prevention are a focus across jurisdictions and have resulted in a stabilising rate of children and young people entering care overall, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering care continues to rise. This, combined with the reduced availability of foster carers, has resulted in a continued mismatch in carer supply relative to need.

The carer shortfall has increased the number of children and young people placed in types of care that may not be best suited to their needs. This includes an increasing number of young children being placed in residential care.

There is a consensus within the out-of-home care (OOHC) sector that more focus on prevention and early intervention is essential to reduce the rate of children entering the care system. However, until this significant shift occurs, the need for kinship and foster carers will remain a priority, necessitating a Life Without Barriers Carer Strategy.

Life Without Barriers is committed to attracting and retaining foster and kinship carers that are committed to providing the very best care to children and young people. We know most children and young people will thrive in family based care and therefore want to facilitate the creation and maintenance of that care environment.

## Strategic context

Life Without Barriers' Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan Transformation Commitment is to progressively step away from providing OOHC services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by 2031. This guides our approach to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and underpins how we work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Consistent with this commitment, this Carer Strategy focuses on sourcing and retaining carers for non-Aboriginal children.

A key priority of the Child, Youth and Family Directorate is to "...consistently deliver great services...". This includes prioritising a more carer-centric culture focused on achieving positive outcomes for children and young people.

This Carer Strategy also sits alongside other key LWB strategies and initiatives, including the Lived Experience Strategy, Learning Without Barriers and the ICT Roadmap.

## The Carer Strategy

The Carer Strategy 2025–2026 on the following page focuses on improving the recruitment, support, and experience of carers by:

- attracting the right carers
- simplifying the recruitment journey
- creating child and carer-centric experiences.

The Carer Strategy emphasises targeted outreach, streamlined processes, and enhanced support systems to ensure carers are well-prepared and connected, addressing the needs of carers and children. Key initiatives include redesigning attraction strategies, refining recruitment, application and assessment processes, and introducing improved models for carer induction and support.

Progress will be tracked through indicators such as lead quality, recruitment timelines, and carer satisfaction. Supported by workforce empowerment, carer feedback, and sector leadership, this strategy aims to deliver measurable outcomes, including higher carer conversion rates, improved placement stability, and enhanced carer well-being.



## Carer Strategy Vision 2025-2026

### Transforming care, empowering communities

Building a foster & kinship care system that attracts, supports, and retains exceptional carers, ensuring every child and young person feels safe, valued, and connected.

## Core activities

Planned activities to find, support, and retain the right carers have been articulated in the diagram below. Each jurisdiction will adapt these activities to fit their local context, certain initiatives, such as recognising and valuing carers, as well as redesigning the recruitment process, will be implemented nationally. This ensures national consistency while enabling flexibility to address unique challenges in different regions, leading to a more effective and supportive care environment overall.

## Key indicators

In the context of the Carer Strategy, key indicators are the specific metrics that will help determine whether the strategy is being successfully implemented, such as the effectiveness of carer attraction activities, the quality of assessments, or the retention rates of carers. These indicators will provide concrete data to monitor progress and make informed decisions for improvement over time.

## Attracting the right carers



### Objective

Optimise community engagement approach to attract a diverse pool of foster carers. Utilise targeted, data-informed and local community partnership driven outreach, tailored to geographic demand, attracting carers who align with the needs of children.

### Core activities

- Review and redesign our attraction strategy.
- Run 'Sharing is Caring' campaign
- Extension of Carer Ambassador program
- Partner with a range of community leaders and influencers to reach diverse communities and broaden carer engagement.

### Key indicators

#### Effectiveness:

- Leads overall
- Lead generation by method of engagement
- Net carer growth
- Campaign efficiency.

#### Quality of leads:

- Conversion rates overall (comparative)
- Conversion rates by lead source.

#### Localisation:

- Proportion of data-driven localised area plans developed and endorsed, implementation monitoring thereafter.

### Outcome

Deep community engagement leading to an increased carer pool best aligned to the needs of children and young people.

## Simplifying the recruitment journey

### Objective

Streamlined and consistent carer application, assessment and approval processes to convert enquirers to accredited carers.

### Core activities

- Redesign application and assessment processes to alleviate barriers and maximise carer approvals.
- Pro-active management of the nurturing pool.
- Review and implement improved guidance for assessors to improve the timeliness and quality of the assessment process.

### Key indicators

#### Timing:

- Recruitment process average times at each process stage
- Applicant engagement timeframes (e.g. initial home visit).

#### Assessment Quality:

- Proportion of assessments returned from panel
- Reasons for assessment report not proceeding.

#### Retention (from application/assessment):

- Average carer application exit rates
- Cost of exits at relevant phases of the recruitment journey
- Rates of exit to nurturing pool
- Reasons for exit.

### Outcome

More efficient and transparent processes leading to higher conversion of accredited carers and improved access to carer training and support.

## Child and carer centric experiences

### Objective

Empowered carers with access to proactive and responsive supports, ensuring they feel valued, confident & equipped to provide quality care, driving positive outcomes for children.

### Core activities

- Design and implement a new model of induction and support of carers
- Enhanced learning opportunities with an emphasis on new carer learning, learning alongside staff, CARE, TCI-F
- Trial a workforce flexibility initiative.
- Extend local programs to recognise, value and build a thriving carer community
- Implement a range of Peer Support initiatives
- Broaden access to a range of flexible respite options.

### Key indicators

#### Carer Experiences:

- Carer satisfaction ratings and feedback
- Carers' referrals of new carers
- Carer exits by year of tenure and reason for exit.

#### Carer Supports:

- Carer learning engagement and completion rates
- Carer participation in events
- Carer Advisory Group.

#### Children's wellbeing:

- Child health & wellbeing measures
- Placement stability (unplanned placement breakdown)
- Children's feedback.

### Outcome

Improved carer retention & wellbeing, with carers feeling connected, empowered and supported to meet the health, safety, wellbeing and educational needs of children and young people.



## Key enablers

To achieve the success of the Carer Strategy illustrated above, three key enablers have been identified to create a foundation for sustainable success and high-quality care.

### Commitment to continuous improvement

Incorporating feedback from carers and children, supported by data and evidence, to create efficient processes, monitor outcomes, enhance training, recognise carers, support peer interactions, and improve communication, with a focus on strengthening technology-based solutions.

### Enabling our workforce

Equipping and recruiting our workforce to provide agile responses to the needs of carers and children, with performance indicators and systems that recognize the necessity of proactive support for carers and carer recruitment.

### Innovation and sector leadership

Advocate for change and drive innovation across the sector, aligned and attuned to the aspirations of carers and children, setting industry standards and sharing achievements.

# LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

## Contact us

For more information on any of the services provided by Life Without Barriers, please contact us on:

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