Collaborating for carers at a grass-roots level

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What was happening in terms of support for carers in Esperance, Western Australia?

- Carer activities in the region hosted by several different carer support agencies—often in an ad hoc manner
- Expos, forums, social and recreational activities would often have clashing dates or follow one after the other
- Funding was often difficult to obtain to support activities and local businesses were often put under pressure to provide donations

Why was it so hard to provide social, recreational and respite activities for carers?

- Limited staff to plan and implement activities
- Limited social and recreational opportunities
- Limited funds available to support activities
- Services operated in isolation from each other
- Carers often associated with two or more support agencies (domestic assistance, care recipient support, respite support)
- Carers reported feeling torn and confused between agencies
- Carers reported feeling pressure to attend so many activities and conflicting loyalties to attend activities conducted by a range of service providers

What did the agencies that provide carer support do about it?

- Formation of the Carer and Disability Services Network Group (CDSNG)
- Terms of Reference Developed
- Aim to forward plan and collaboratively support carer activities in the Esperance / South East Coastal Region

Who were the members of the CDSNG?

- Esperance Home Care
- Disability Services Commission
- Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre
- Esperance Volunteer Resource Centre
- Bay of Isles Community Outreach Inc
- Goldfields Individual Family Support Assoc
- Activ Foundation
What were the advantages of the group?
• Coordinated and cohesive approach
• Reduced duplication of efforts
• Reduced confusion to carers
• Shared workload
• Greater impact with fewer resources
• Attracted grant money to the region
• Collaboration is appreciated by funding bodies

What outcomes made achieving group goals easier?
• Met with Carers WA in September 2011 to discuss their support for social activities for carers to be conducted by the Carer and Disability Services Network Group
• Carers WA provided funding by November 2011 via an agreement established with Esperance Home Care (EHC) to manage the funds

What social, recreational and respite activities were conducted for carers?
Movie Event, Saturday 11th February 2012, 9.00am to 12 noon, choice of two movies, The Iron Lady and We Bought A Zoo, plus a free drink and a choc bomb ice cream, service staff and volunteers attended, info and resources were on display and given away

What was the feedback from carers that attended the movie event?
• It was nice to have some time out and meet other carers
• I liked having a choice of movie and getting together with the other ladies

Fishing Event, Wednesday 11th April 2012, 7.00am to 4.00pm, Local Fishing Charter Boat, All equipment, bait, food and drinks supplied, Focus on accessing and supporting male carers, Staff dropped off and picked up food, carers contact details obtained for follow up

What was the feedback from carers that attended the fishing event?
• It was a good day, would have liked to stay out longer
• It was good that everyone was able to take home some fish, food was good

Pamper Day, Friday 11th May 2012, 10.00am to 4.00pm, Massages, Facials, Manicures, Pedicures, Foot Spas, Indian Head Massage, Relaxation Therapy, All services provided at no charge, Refreshments available all day, Agency staff and volunteers attended

What was the feedback from carers that attended the pamper day event?
• Wonderful, lovely day, brilliant being able to have foot spa’s and foot and hand massages while we waited. Restful, nice catching up with other carers, nice being able to pick at refreshments when we liked
• Nice all getting together, the Indian Head massage did raise some emotions for me
• Wonderful day, enjoyed the refreshments and having my feet done, I find it hard to get to my feet these days
So who came along to these events?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of carers for all activities</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of staff/volunteers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of carers from non-English background</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of carers ATSI background</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of carers for which this was 1st social activity</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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What was the total cost for all events?
- Carers WA granted $3,600
- Carers Movie Event—total cost = $406.70
- Carers Fishing Event—total cost = $1,850.45
- Carers Pamper Day—total cost = $1,464.38

Total cost all events = $3,721.53

What were some of the outcomes for carers?
- Reminded of respite services in the community
- Reassured they are not alone and others are facing similar situations and challenges
- Recognised that it is ok to receive support and respite
- Realised that their caring roles are recognised and valued
- Reinforced that carers need to take care of themselves in order to be able to continue caring for another

What are the plans for future carer support?
- Service providers included in the TOR have been asked to review their position and commitment
- Carers WA are looking at continuing to fund Linking Together in Esperance and other regions
- The Network Group are continuing to identify ways to reach carers who may be unaware that assistance is available for them.