

Public Health and Other Legislation (COVID-19 Management) Amendment Bill 2022

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| Submission No: | 2 |
| Submitted by: | Carers Queensland Ltd. |
| Publication: | Making the submission and your name public |
| Attachments: | See attachment |
| Submitter Comments: | |



SUBMISSION

**Inquiry in the Public Health and Other Legislation
(COVID-19 Management) Amendment Bill 2022**

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| Submission Title: | Inquiry into the Public Health and Other Legislation (COVID-19 Management) Amendment Bill 2022 |
| Date: | 8 September 2022 |
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CARERS QUEENSLAND

The activity and impact of providing care is best understood in terms of its context; as a relationship between two or more individuals, rooted in family, friendship, or community. Caring is a role rarely chosen by most, nor does it discriminate. Children and young people, people of working age and older people, people with disability, people who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse, indigenous Australians, people with diverse bodies, genders, relationships, and sexualities and those living in rural and remote Queensland provide care to family members or friends daily. For some caring is a short-term commitment whilst for others, it is a role that literally lasts a lifetime.

Family and friend carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic medical condition, terminal illness or are frail aged. Carers come from all walks of life.

Carers Queensland is the peak body representing the diverse concerns, needs and interests of caring families in Queensland. Carers Queensland believes that all carers regardless of their age, disability, gender or gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, geographical location, or their cultural and linguistic differences should have the same rights, choices and opportunities and be able to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family and community life, employment, and education like other citizens. Carers Queensland's mission is to improve the quality of life of all carers throughout Queensland.

We aspire to provide an independent platform from which to advance the issues and concerns of the 533,200 carers in Queensland and believe our knowledge and expertise in carer issues means we can provide the Government with relevant and trusted information that will ensure that the needs of carers will be recognised, respected, and acted on.

Our submission is informed by national and international peer reviewed data, our own experience as a service provider and the personal and often difficult admissions of carers, those people who provide unpaid care and support.

Introduction

Carers Queensland commends the Government on the consultative and transparent way it is developing its step-down approaches to managing the COVID-19 pandemic and appreciates the opportunity to make comment on the Inquiry into the Public Health and Other Legislation (COVID-19 Management) Amendment Bill 2022.

Discussion and Recommendation

By virtue of their circumstances, some carers and the people they care for and support, are some of the most vulnerable and isolated in our society. The controls necessary to effectively manage the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated both their vulnerability and isolation, particularly those whose access to community-based services was either reduced or unavailable during the extended lockdown periods. The reduced access to community-based services created an additional responsibility on many carers to manage the changed situation as effectively as possible.

Understanding the impact of the pandemic measures on carers and those they care for and support, Carers Queensland welcomes the proposed changes to the Public Health Act and other legislation.

We welcome the exclusion of carers in the definition of *worker* (new section 142B, chapter 3, part 5A) and respectfully suggest the strengthening of this exclusion by referencing the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2008* in Section 6 Meaning of *carer*.