

Wesley Mission Melbourne

Wesley Mission Melbourne welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the discussion paper regarding the implementation of a Carers Reward Card. We commend the Department of Human Services (DHS) for the development of this initiative, and support the introduction of a scheme which will raise awareness of the importance of the role that carers play, at the same time as offering practical, financial assistance.

Wesley Mission Melbourne interacts with carers, and those they care for, in a number of settings: foster carers, carers of people with a disability, and carers of older people who require assistance with daily living. Many of the carers we have involvement with are in receipt of some form of concession card, generally linked to an income support payment they receive, which entitles them to some of the benefits that the Carers Reward Card will provide. Nevertheless, eligibility and access to concessions varies from scheme to scheme, and access to a broad-based scheme such as this will go some way to making up for some of the disparities between existing schemes.

We support the definition of a carer provided on page 2 of the discussion paper, and understand that ‘self-care, communication and mobility’ are intended to capture all aspects of daily living that an individual might require assistance with. However, our experience of working with carers in many different contexts suggests to us that carers conceptualise their role differently, and perhaps more holistically in terms of support for living in community. We therefore recommend that implementation of the scheme include consideration of the language that carers themselves use to describe their role, and that this is integrated into the definition.

Finally, in relation to the three eligibility models that are proposed in the paper, we would like to express strong support for Option Three: The broad-based model. We believe that this is the best choice in relation to capturing the broadest range of carers, and is the least bureaucratic in nature. We believe that this is particularly attractive in light of the intention of the scheme to recognize the important, informal work that carers undertake.

Once again, we commend DHS for the development of this scheme, and look forward to its implementation.