# CARER GATEWAY PROCESS EVALUATION KEY FINDINGS

**June 2021**

## Context

Across Australia, there are an estimated 2.65 million carers who provide support and assistance for loved ones who live with additional care needs (Department of Social Services, 2019). The value of informal care provided by Australia's carers has been estimated to be $77.9 billion per year. Carers play a crucial role in our society, providing unpaid and ongoing support to those most in need (ABS, 2020).

Carer Gateway is a Commonwealth funded national program led by the Department of Social Services, and was launched in April 2020. It provides online, telephone and face-to-face support to carers across Australia. The Department is undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of Carer Gateway, including a baseline evaluation, ongoing program monitoring, a process evaluation, a carer wellbeing survey, and an impact evaluation. Urbis has been commissioned to deliver the process evaluation, commencing in December 2020 and concluding in June 2021. This document provides a summary of the Urbis findings and recommendations.

## Process Evaluation Methods

The process evaluation was delivered between December 2020 and June 2021 and included three phases. Phase 1 Inception and Planning involved development of an evaluation plan, tools and an ethics approval process. Phase 2 Interim Data Collection and Reporting involved a review of program and website data, consultation with n=75 carers, and the development of an Interim Report. The evaluation concluded with Phase 3 Final Data Collection and Reporting, which involved consultation with service providers and sector stakeholders, as well as additional analysis of program data and carer wellbeing survey data. All data was then synthesised and used to inform the development of recommendations to support the ongoing delivery of the program. All findings and recommendations are presented in the Final Report.

## Summary of Key Findings

Design Phase (2015 to 2018):

* The design process was robust, and informed by available evidence.
* Most stakeholders reported a very positive consultation experience, and found the Department to be highly collaborative and engaged.
* Some stakeholders found the resulting program following detailed design did not fully align to what was discussed during the national consultation.

Procurement Phase (2018 to 2019):

* Most stakeholders reflected the RFQ process was effective and well organised.
* A number of organisations found the modelling requirements and forming consortia challenging through this process.
* A delay in announcing results meant high degree of uncertainty for existing providers and their workforce.
* The transition period was difficult for many organisations and carers. Specific issues in transitioning carer data and educating the sector about the magnitude of change directly impacted this process.

Implementation and Operating Phase (2020 to 2021):

* The program was successfully launched, after a complex transition period and at the same time as the first COVID-19 lockdowns in Australia.
* Some carers registered easily, whilst others found this process confusing.
* Stakeholders had very mixed feedback on the Carers StarTM. Some carers find it valuable, while for others it is challenging, particularly if administered during a time of high distress.
* Many carers experiences extensive delays between registering for their new provider and actually receiving services. For carers who did receive services, some aspects of the new model do not yet fully meet their needs.

## Summary of Recommendations

* Deliver awareness raising and educational support about the model.
* Improve frontline capability in collecting and using Carers StarTM data.
* Increase monitoring of compliance of Carers StarTM completion rates.
* Continue the COVID-19 ‘fast track’ intake option for carers with extremely high levels of need.
* Improve integration of online, telephone, and face-to-face components.
* Review respite processes.
* Re-incorporate social connection for carers.