



Representing Carers in Regional and Remote Western Australia

Midwest Region
May 2024

Carers in the Midwest Region

63.47% of carers believe there is a need for further recognition of carers.

In WA 24% of carers are in crisis.¹ This is especially prevalent in WA regional areas.

The Midwest region is an area of socio-economic disadvantage.

93.8%

of the local government areas (LGAs) in this region are ranked as areas experiencing economic disadvantage.²

1 in 10 people in the region are carers



5,883 carers

A high proportion of the population is in the 55-64 and 65+ age groups.

This indicates a high current and future demand for aged care services, in-home care, and for carers.

9.5%

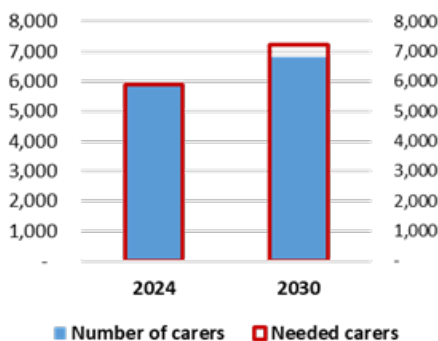
of people from a First Nations background, compared to 3.3% in WA⁵.

28.3%

(1 in 5 people) living in the Midwest region report having one or more long-term health conditions. This amounts to over 15,535 people⁶.

Projected Demand for Carers in the Midwest Region

Shortfall of carers in the Midwest

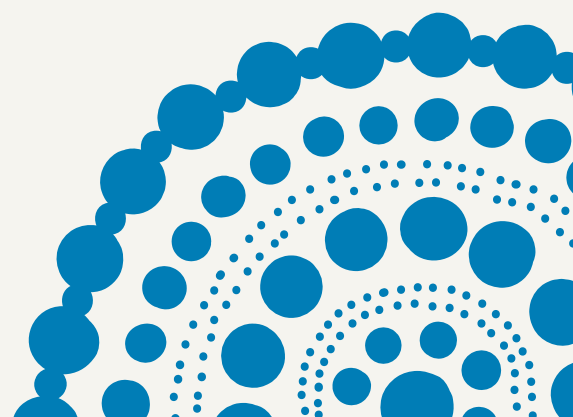


While the demand for informal carers in Australia is projected to increase **23%** by 2030, the number of informal carers is only projected to increase by **16%** over this timeframe⁷.

For the Midwest region, this represents a **shortfall of 412 carers by 2030**. This amounts to a minimum cost of \$11.46 million in wages per year for formal carers to cover this shortfall.

This does not account for the cost of other alternate care arrangements for the person receiving care.

- (SAGE Design & Advisory, 2023)
- (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023)
- (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023)
- (Rural Health West, 2016)
- (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021)
- (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021)
- (Deloitte Access Economics, 2020)



What can be done to better support carers in the Midwest Region?

Carers WA 2024-25 Policy Priorities:

- Better recognition of carers in WA
- Investment to improve the health and wellbeing of carers
- Better economic outcomes, carer advocacy and lived experience participation
- Improving the systems that carers navigate and use

Key recommendations from consultations with the Midwest community, to assist on addressing identified barriers, include:

1. Investigate options for the establishment of a respite house/carer retreat in the Midwest.
2. Support initiatives which provide increased and affordable access to quality respite services in the region.
3. Support initiatives which provide increased access to quality aged care services in the Midwest.
4. Investigate options for navigator or one-stop hub services and partnerships in the Midwest.

What is Carers WA doing for carers in the Midwest Region?

Carers WA is the peak body for carers in WA and the service provider for the Carer Gateway in WA, which provides a range of individualised services for carers. These services are available state wide. Carer Gateway is an Australian government initiative providing a mix of online, telephone and in-person supports, services and advice for family carers. This may include in-person peer support, facilitated carer coaching, counselling, tailored support packages and emergency respite.

Carers WA has dedicated outreach teams which travel to regional areas, such as the Midwest, and also undertakes regional engagement to connect with carers and regional communities.

As part its regional engagement in the Midwest region in May 2024, Carers WA consulted widely with the community on what was and wasn't working for carers in the region.

As a result of the feedback from these consultations, Carers WA has committed to undertake:

1. Increased awareness raising and information on carers, Carers WA, the Carer Gateway, how processes work and who to contact. Increased awareness raising on Carers WA and Helping Minds consortium relationship.
2. Continue to build relationships with service providers for delivery of practical supports, domestic supports, respite and services for carers within the region that reflects the demands on the ground.
3. Investigate options for increased availability of carer supports in the Midwest.
4. Investigate options for expansion of Carers WA's Aboriginal Healing Program to the Midwest.
5. Investigate options for more events for carers in Geraldton which are family friendly, allow for the person being cared for to also attend, or which are at varying times i.e. evening event options.

Identified Barriers for Carers in the Midwest Region

| Barrier | Description | Impact |
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| <p>Lack of respite and carer retreats</p> | <p>Need for respite and carer retreats was raised as the most significant area of need for carers in the Midwest, a need which also impacted on carers' ability to access services. Carers indicated they were not able to take a break or attend scheduled carer events due to a lack of respite and support workers in the region. Respite services in the region were limited and had extensive waitlists.</p> <p>Informal carers experience increased and heightened levels of social isolation, loneliness, psychological distress, as well as ill health and low wellbeing. Access to respite for an informal carer can help carers to have a healthy level of wellbeing, and better maintain and thrive in their caring role.</p> | <p>Carers feel frustrated, burnt out and dissatisfied with their caring role. Carers are not able to access services for themselves due to a lack of respite and support workers in the region.</p> |
| <p>Awareness of carers and carer services</p> | <p>63.47% of carers believe there is a need for further recognition of carers.</p> | <p>This results in a lack of carer recognition, identification and support, and carers not being able to access services at all or in a timely manner due to misunderstandings or lack of referral.</p> |
| <p>Availability of carer services</p> | <p>The community raised concerns about the availability of carer services in Geraldton and the Midwest. It was raised that there was a need for greater availability in a carer support role to cover the needs of carers in the Midwest. Carers were in support of a greater availability of family friendly carer events, where the care recipient could also attend, and events at a greater range of times. i.e. evening events. This is also due to a lack of respite and support workers resulting in carers not often being able to take a break.</p> <p>The community also identified a lack of culturally appropriate supports for First Nations carers in town, and that First Nations carers do not necessarily want to attend a standard support group.</p> | <p>Lack of engagement or availability of carer supports may result in increased carer burnout, isolation and low wellbeing.</p> |

Identified Barriers for Carers in the Midwest Region

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| <p>Lack of services and connectivity between services</p> | <p>Only three aged care facilities were available in Geraldton, all of which had extensive waiting lists – averaging around 48+ applicants waiting for a bed. The community reported continued limited access to aged care services, with aged care facilities running at 98% capacity and little domestic assistance. Strict eligibility criteria were also reported for some aged care services, which made access difficult for the high (19.1%) proportion of the Midwest’s population aged over 65.</p> | <p>Families who are under significant carer stress may bring their loved one to the hospital as a last resort, for social admission, where they may wait in hospital for an extensive period of time (weeks/ months) waiting for a bed to become available at an aged care facility. During this time, their health may deteriorate, decondition and mental health decline, as they are limited in how much they do while on the ward.</p> |
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