

# DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH

Hon Nic Street MP

*Carer Recognition Bill 2022*

\*check Hansard for delivery\*

Mr Speaker

It is my great honour today to stand and speak to the Carer Recognition Bill that we have tabled in Parliament.

Mr Speaker, informal, unpaid carers make a huge, and often unrecognised contribution to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

People care for their family members and friends because they love them. They may not even consider that they are a carer. There may be people in this place who are carers and who are balancing the demands of work, and support for a loved one.

The Tasmanian Government wants you to know that we see you, we value you, and we support you.

The purpose of the *Carer Recognition Bill 2022* is to formally recognise, promote and value the significant contribution of carers in the Tasmanian community.

This Bill recognises the approximately 85,000 Tasmanians who provide support to family members and friends as unpaid and informal carers.

Carers play a significant role in our community. However, many of us are not aware of the enormous contribution carers make, or fully appreciate the challenges carers may face every day.

We can become a carer at any point in our lives— as a child, a young person, an adult or in retirement. A carer may care for their family, or a neighbour or friend.

Carers provide support to their loved ones because of disability, mental ill health, drug or alcohol issues, dementia, or health conditions - from chronic illness, frailty in ageing, to palliative care.

The voice of carers has informed this Bill. Carers and peak bodies were widely consulted to develop the Bill including the Carer Issues Reference Group, online community consultation, and regional face-to-face workshops.

Together with my office and department, I have worked closely with Carers Tasmania to ensure we get this right – and I want to thank David, Julie and the team at Carers Tasmania for their hard work.

Further consultation was undertaken on the draft Bill, and we have listened.

And this is why we are putting forward an amendment to the language used in the definition tabled in the Parliament on 15 June 2022.

This amendment reflects the feedback we heard. It makes sure that we are using the most inclusive and contemporary language when describing mental ill health and disability.

This is also why we will be seeking a further amendment to the legislation – to recognise informal, unpaid kinship carers.

Mr Speaker, grandparents who are informally raising grandchildren, and other informal kinship carers taking care of children, provide a vital service to our community. They ensure that children and young people who cannot be with their parents, but who are not in formal out of home care, are being nurtured and are safe.

They often do this in extremely challenging circumstances. In consulting on this Bill we have heard stories of informal kinship carers, and the vital role they play in family networks.

And so, we will also agree to recognise informal kinship carers by including them in the bill.

This Bill will enact a Carers Charter which sets out clear expectations of how carers are to be treated, and how they are to be involved in delivering services that affect them and their caring role.

The Bill also sets out the obligations of Tasmanian Government Agencies to monitor and report in relation to the Carers Charter and the Tasmanian Carer Action Plan.

Mr Speaker, it is my pleasure today to announce that in consultation with members, the Terms of Reference for the Carer Issues Reference Group have been reviewed.

It has been agreed to elevate the group to the Minister's Carer Advisory Council, which I will Chair.

A key focus of the new Minister's Carer Advisory Council will be the inclusion of members with lived caring experience, representing a diversity of carers. Carers are experts of their own experience, and we want to continue to listen to the voice of carers as we implement the Carer Charter and Tasmanian Carer Action Plan.

The Minister's Carer Advisory Council will provide advice and assist in monitoring formal annual reporting by Tasmanian Government Agencies on the Carers Charter and Tasmanian Carer Action Plan.

Shortly we will open expressions of interest to join the Minister's Carer Advisory Council and help us to ensure we are recognising and supporting Tasmanian carers.

This Bill recognises carers for the huge contributions they make to our community. It is important that carers are respected as individuals as well as key partners in the broader care support network.

As I said, carers come from all walks of life, and have different types of care relationships. We have intentionally used a broad term, to be inclusive, and to ensure that a wide diversity of unpaid, informal care relationships are recognised.

This Bill delivers our election commitment to provide formal legislative recognition of carers in Tasmania for the first time, with the intention to influence cultural and community perceptions towards carers, to value their role and contribution.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.