

Rethinking

MENTAL HEALTH

6.0

A Whole of Health Approach

Rethinking carer engagement in a health setting

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#RTMH

Who are carers?

- Provide care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug and/or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail.
- This definition does not include:
 - paid care workers
 - formal volunteers
 - parents / foster carers / kinship carers
- 904,400 carers in NSW, including approximately 278,700 primary carers*

* 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers



Presentation overview



What will be covered

- The health and wellbeing of carers
- How this may be impacted by appropriate support, inclusion, recognition in health care settings
- Key opportunities for policy change

Background



Carers NSW 2018 Carer Survey

- State-wide survey of family and friend carers in NSW (aged 16+ years)
- Developed in consultation with expert reference committee
- Range of topics to inform research and advocacy:
 - Demographics
 - The caring relationship
 - Services and support
 - Experiences of paid work
 - Health and wellbeing
- Survey distributed in online and hard copy form
- Not representative, more in-depth questions than SDAC

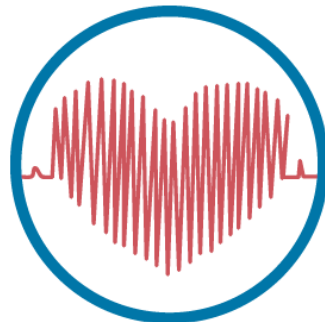
2018 results: health and wellbeing



37%
of carers have a long-term illness
or disability



44%
have high levels of psychological
distress



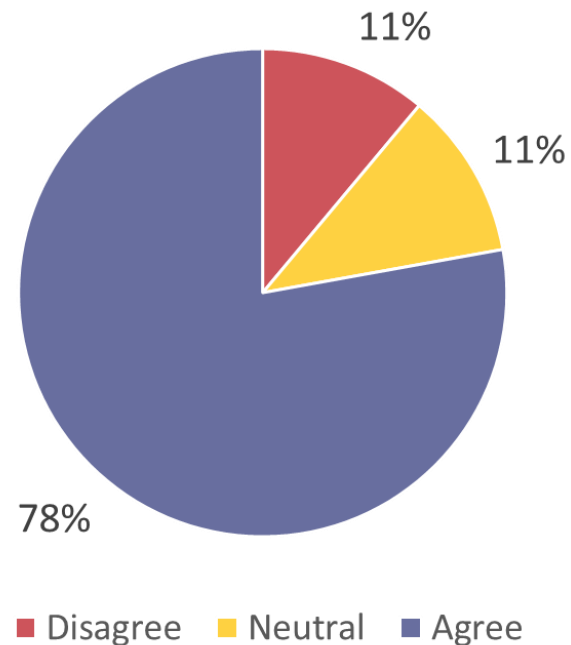
49%
of carers report dissatisfaction
with their own health



Carers score **28%** lower on the
wellbeing scale than the
Australian average

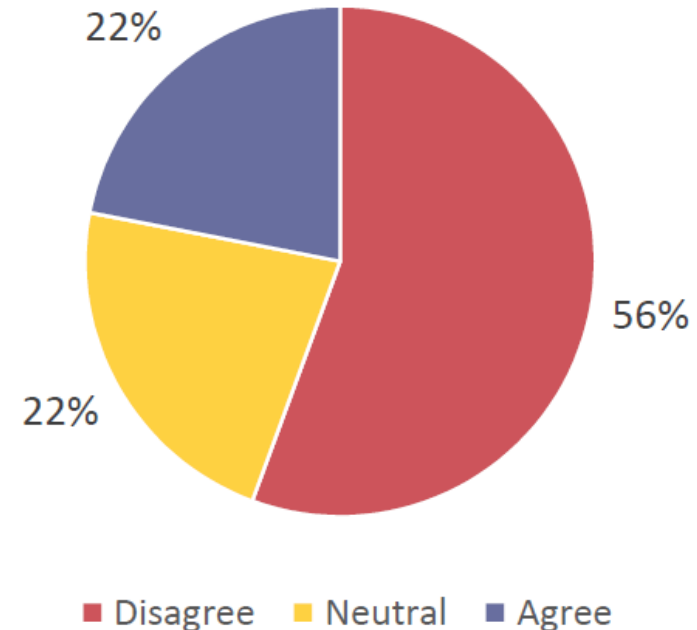
2018 results: hospital services

Carer inclusion in decision making (hospital)



n=1399

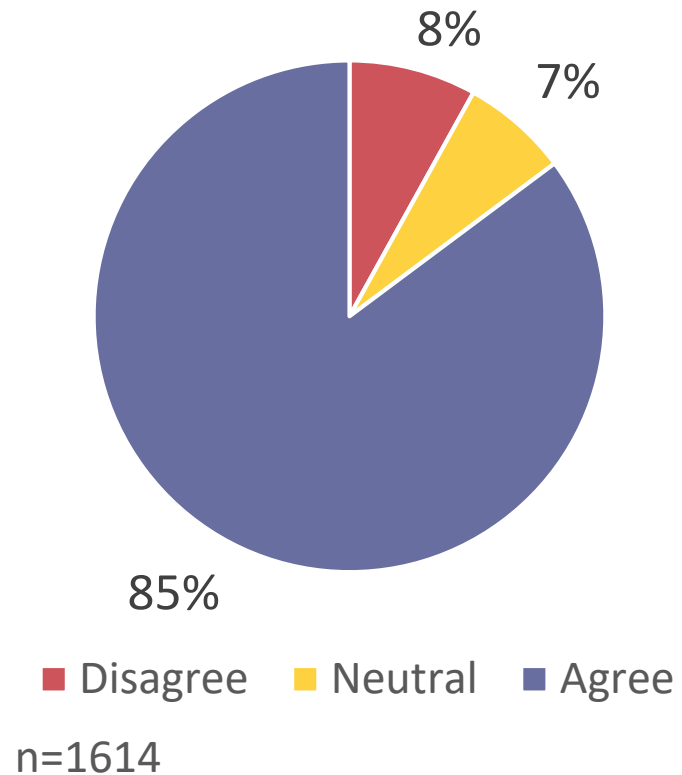
Carer asked about own needs (hospital)



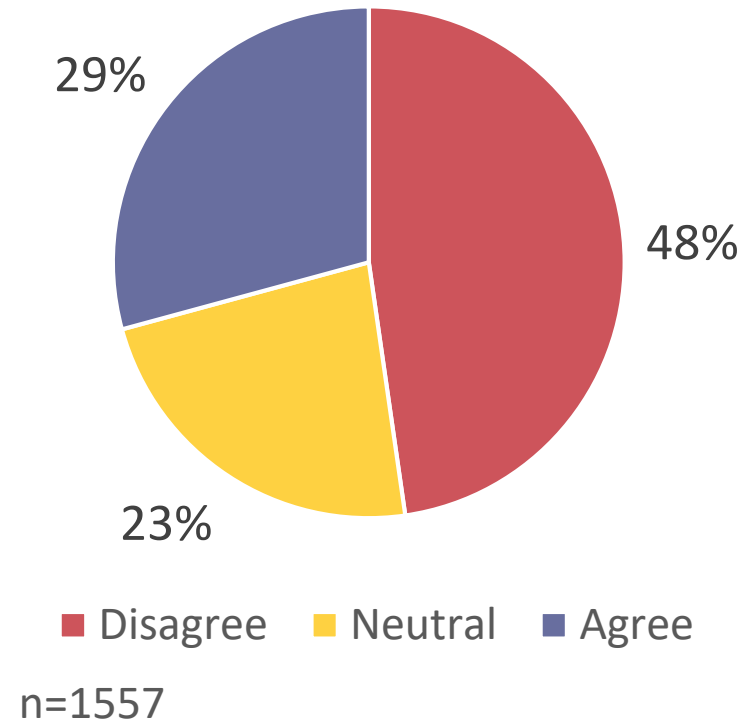
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2018 results: GP services

Carer inclusion in decision making (GP)



Carer asked about own needs (GP)



2018 results: qualitative data

Carer suggestions for improving the health system

Thematic analysis of qualitative responses identified **inclusion, support, and recognition** as key areas for improvement:

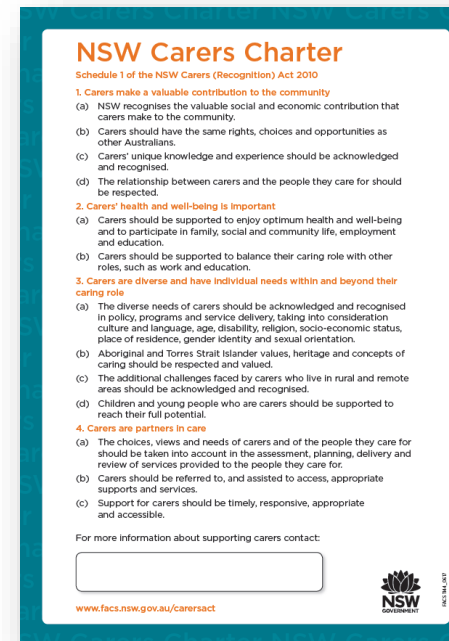
- **Carer inclusion:** Actively seeking information from the carer, and proactively including carer in communication flow and decision making
- **Carer support:** Advising on available carer support services, including carer needs in case management, be aware of carer's wellbeing
- **Carer recognition:** Acknowledging and valuing a carer's role in the treatment process



2018 results: policy implications

Key points

- Carer inclusion needs to occur at both individual and agency levels
- Carers are 'partners in care' but also individuals with their own needs
- Some carers may be 'hidden' – identification is key
- Ongoing advocacy for adequate support for care recipients to allow carers to focus on their own health and wellbeing





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