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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3C used the definition adopted by Carers NSW, the peak state body providing support and advocacy for carers: "A carer is any individual who provides care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail due to age."<sup>1</sup>

3C aimed to deliver immediate support to academic women carers at UNSW through career coaching and additional

support provided by UNSW's Athena Swan Program Office.<sup>2</sup>

It leveraged UNSW research capacity through The Social Policy Research Centre in the Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture to conduct the associated research. Colleagues in Human Resources and the Division of Equity Diversity and Inclusion supported the design and delivery of the program. An advisory group brought together professional and academic colleagues with both research expertise and lived experience of caring from different faculties and divisions. This coalition of stakeholders ensures insights generated through the program reflect knowledge, experiences and strategic objectives held across the university.



The following Key Messages, based on this research, present a pathway to positively impact the careers and wellbeing of carers employed at UNSW:

- UNSW employs an engaged, generous, ambitious community of carers who want to effect change, contribute to, and be valued by UNSW.
- The findings of this report support clear recommendations that will impact carers' day-to-day experiences and capacity.
- These recommendations align with the Carers NSW Carers + Employers program<sup>12</sup> that defines standards for supporting staff with caring responsibilities.
- Becoming a carer-inclusive workplace will: unlock potential in UNSW's workforce; benefit all staff as anyone can become a carer at any time; future-proof UNSW as the caring responsibilities of Australian

views. This theme recommends mechanisms for advocacy, engagement, and peer support across levels of university governance.

2.1 Develop regular, robust and sensitive data gathering about UNSW carers and their experiences, including the impact of UNSW measures to support carers.

2.2 Ensure carers are represented on University EDI Staff Consultative Group.\*

2.3 Appoint Carer Advocates within each faculty to support carers in work planning, carer's leave management, and career progression.\*

2.4 Establish and support a carer network with associated events and communications to raise carer visibility and build community.\*

UNSW policies, procedures and support when assessed against international good practice and achievable solutions for addressing





who are remunerated for their involvement. Other UNSW initiatives such as a greater commitment to shared leadership would also make it more possible for carers to lead change.<sup>32</sup>

A recurring theme across the research was the gap between the day-to-day experience of care responsibilities and the culture and requirements of the workplace. As one carer commented:

*I see a desire in academia to embrace people like me and my demographic. But I am frequently on the edge of giving up work because the care cultures I'm in everyday and the cultures of academia are worlds apart.*

Carers throughout the 3C project shared accounts of difficult work situations due to a lack of understanding and empathy for carer experience. Training for managers as described in recommendation 3.4 is part of the solution to address this issue. However, it is also important to ensure that people with lived experience of caring are more involved with carer support at school and faculty levels.

Carers called for advocates within faculties to positively mediate between carers and organisational processes. Caring situations are often emotional, and acute issues can be stressful and require full attention. Carers do not have the capacity to be both carers and advocates for caring at the same time. It is important to remove the burden from carers to educate managers about the nature of care work, and the need to repeatedly explain their caring situation. Carer Advocates with lived experience of caring, appointed from within the existing staff of each faculty, would support carers practically to overcome some of the barriers they face in management of work-life balance and career progression, including work-planning meetings, carer's leave management, MyCareer Conversations and promotion processes. The role should be recognised with an appropriate workload allocation and training. Carer Advocates would champion the contribution of carers within faculties and ensure they are supported to apply for promotion and leadership opportunities.

A positive outcome of 3C for the participants was the impact of connecting with other carers (see Appendix 1). As one carer commented:

*The most valuable thing that I got out of it was a couple of connections. Then we connected afterwards and kind of built our own little community of practice.*

Knowing that there are others with similar experiences within the workplace helps to dispel stigma and build confidence amongst carers to discuss their care work and the challenges they face. Peer-to-peer support is also effective on many occasions.



addressing specific areas of concern raised by carers, such as university metrics, career planning, promotion, and pathways from casual to permanent employment. Carers make unique contributions to society and the university. But they require specific kinds of support and adjustments to ensure they can thrive in paid employment. Strengths-based policies must be carried through in practice. This theme also addresses the wide variation in levels of literacy and empathy for carers amongst Heads of School and other managers.

UNSW is currently undertaking a major institutional policy review process. It is vital that the needs of carers (based on the appropriate definition established in recommendation 1.3) are explicitly addressed. This is a significant opportunity to establish a strong foundation for UNSW as a carer-inclusive w

Care work may limit how much paid work a person can do, but it is a valuable and necessary contribution to society, and requires and develops significant skills and capacities. The professional output of a carer may be impacted by care work, but their ability, expertise and contribution as a worker may be enhanced. It is vital to develop and apply mechanisms for managing workload and career advancement that properly acknowledge this.





- 1 <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/about-caring/who-are-carers>
- 2 Athena Swan (Scientific Women's Academic Network) is an international charter and awards program for gender equity, diversity, and inclusion, administered in Australia by SAGE – Science in Australia Gender Equity: <https://www.edi.unsw.edu.au/frameworks/sage-athena-swan-award>
- 3 ABS (2018), Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release>
- 4 Budnick, A. Herig, C. Eggert, S. Tuebner, C. Suhr, R. Kuhlmeier, A. and Gellert, P. (2021) 'Informal caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic perceive additional burden: Findings from an ad-hoc survey in Germany', BMC Health Services Research, 21:535 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-021-06359-7>; Muldrew, H. Fee, A. and Coates, V. (2021) 'Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family carers in the community: A scoping review', Health and Social Care, 30, 1275-85 DOI: 10.1111/hsc.13677
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- 9 Commonwealth of Australia (2019) Carers of older Australians, Background paper 6, Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, APH, Canberra <https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-12/background-paper-6.pdf>
- 10 Commonwealth of Australia (2023) The Senate, Select Committee on Work and Care: Final report, Canberra APH, available at [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Work\\_and\\_Care/workandcare](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Work_and_Care/workandcare)
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- 12 <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/services-and-support/programs-services/carers-employers>
- 13 Tronto, J. (2017) 'There is an alternative: homines curans and the limits of neoliberalism', Bristol University Press, 1 (1), 27-43, <https://doi.org/10.1332/239788217X14866281687583>
- 14 Deloitte Access Economics (2020) The value of informal caring in 2020, Carers Australia, Canberra, available at <https://www.deloitte.com/au/en/services/economics/perspectives/value-of-informal-care-2020.html>
- 15 Gleeson, P. et al (2020) [6]
- 16 Quotes from carers throughout this report have been minimally edited for clarity.

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Appendix 1: What 3C delivered

Appendix 2: Research methodology

Appendix 3: Existing UNSW policy and provision for carers

To view the appendices in full, please visit <https://www.edi.unsw.edu.au/get->