



National Mental Health
Consumer & Carer Forum



MONASH
University

Mental Health Family Carer Experiences of COVID-19 in Australia

'Mental Health Family Carer Experiences of COVID-19 in Australia' is a co-designed research project that looked at how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the experiences and wellbeing of caregivers who support people with mental health challenges.

Who did the researchers hear from?

The researchers heard from 174 family members, friends, carers and supporters from every state and territory in Australia.



73 in
focus groups



101 by
survey

♀141

♂21

*4



What did they find?

Mental Health Service closures, changes and restrictions resulted in feelings of abandonment, increased psychological distress, and growing need for support for mental health consumers.

Family Carers provided more hours and more complex support during the pandemic, many without the assistance of financial, practical, social or emotional resources.

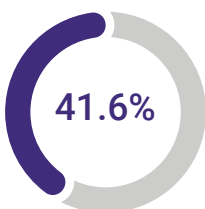
The additional stresses resulting from inadequate service and government support during the pandemic resulted in family carers feeling isolated, overwhelmed, distressed, financially vulnerable, fearful - and in some cases, experiencing thoughts of suicide.

Care provided before the pandemic

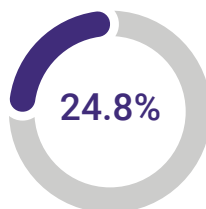
26.3 hours of care per week

Care provided during the pandemic

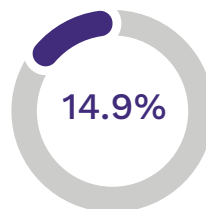
40.35 hours of care per week



Said their employment
changed.



Received a carer
allowance.



Received a carer
payment.



I feel like the pandemic did, you know, it didn't kill me, but it certainly broke me.



When the person you care for is at extreme risk, it is already 24/7, then to have cancellation without notice of carefully negotiated supports puts intolerable strain on you. I have had to reduce my working hours (and income).



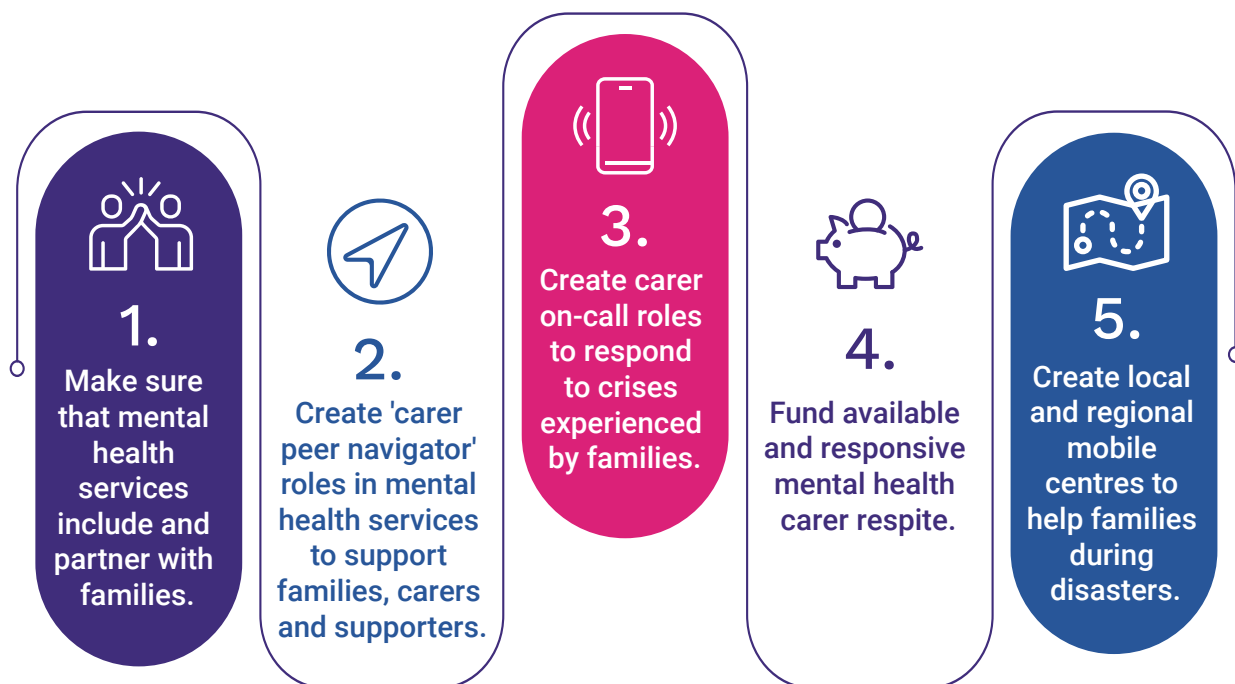
This has impacted my job, my relationships, my mental health, my ability to care for myself and my other children, my ability to contribute to the care of my elderly parents, my ability to contribute to society. Everything has been impacted negatively.



I've rung every single person, every single group possible. And they all say they'll get back to me because it's urgent. And we're talking about suicidal ideation... really desperate situations. And yet, nobody ever gets back to me.

What do they recommend?

Short-term recommendations to Australian governments over the next 6-12 months:



Long-term recommendations to the Australian Government:



Who did this research?

The research is by Associate Professor Melissa Petrakis and Caroline Walters from the SWITCH Research Group at Monash University, in collaboration with the National Mental Health Consumer Carer Forum (NMHCCF). The NMHCCF funded it, thanks to a grant from the National Mental Health Commission.

You can download the executive summary of the full report at:

<https://nmhccf.org.au/news/mental-health-family-carer-experiences-of-covid-19-in-australia>

For more information, please contact the NMHCCF at nmhccf@mhaustralia.org, or the researchers at melissa.petrakis@monash.edu or caroline.walters@monash.edu